lee Review

spring 2003

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The LEE Review

spring 2003

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Lee University
Cleveland, Tennessee

The Lee Review Policy

The Lee Review wishes to acknowledge those who seek to glorify God with the gifts that He has provided them. To that end, we have diligently labored to produce a publication that we, the staff, students, and faculty of Lee University, can pride ourselves in. We regret that not everything submitted to the magazine can be published. We have, however, attempted to select those works which we find to best reflect this magazine's commitment to presenting through art the truth of an authentic Christian life, life with heartache, questions, struggles, failures, victories, joy, happiness, answers, exuberance, lament, and fun. We ask that as you read through this anthology, you seek to understand the vast nature of God and the many ways He works among His beloved people.

4/25/03, GIFT OF LU EMFL DEPT.

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Editor's Awards for Outstanding Submissions In:

Poetry • **Easter Sunday (for Wes)** • Dyana R. Herron
Prose • **Magnolias** • Tanya Lane
Art • **Abstract** • Chris Sarine

I have come from the altar to tell you this;
I, who do not mistake fear for love, have come
To tell you to bury me under that mount--
That hideous peak of holiness where Laughter quivered
Under Promise, where a child lay beneath
His father's blade of crescent moon, that mount
Three days' journey from the promise untested
And the mother whose womb was living stone
Pouring her rasp and acerbic snickers into unformed flesh,
That mount rising like doubt, on which a father's
Sweat and grease, but never tears, fell like honey,
Dripped like blood from the withered pages of faith.
Neither God nor his white-rob'd companions
Stood before us then--a family, a nation,
In a grotesque play on a bed of slumbering fire--
My father, O my father, how cold was the sound of
Your impotent knees creaking under the motion of that blade.
A sob lodged itself in my throat, my skin flinched once
More for my father's steel. The fiery mouth of God
Gaped wide before me and I almost prayed.
Do not think me ironic when I say that
The covenant's mark did not hurt until then--
I, who do not mistake relief for joy.
I have come from the altar to tell you this:
Bury me under that mount where I was bound.

To Melodie

Grace Ann Rollins

A song allows small space for error.
Too many wrong notes and the tune is lost.
How difficult must it be to earn your name!
Yet, you wear it most admirably.

The remembrance of you plucks strings of longing,
a welcome song to soothe me in a sorrow.
Such consolation is an unforeseen gift,
a vine of wisteria on ancient walls.

Yet you are a composition of all that I fear—
Mother, Wife--matronly model,
at least, of the image graven,
of the idol, the goddess, I've tried to forsake.

When lipstick never fades, how can I forget?
With such performance, how cease my desiring?
Shall perfume always linger after resonance,
long after a singer has quit the stage?

I can't wear all black,
Because I don't own Dickies, nor boots.
But mourning is more than
clothes and black fingernail
polish,
Just like thinkers,
Because.

A cup full of hunger was all it took,
To emancipate you from jail cells
And strait jackets,
Into the wide, cold lonely world,
Where wolves await your flesh.
Maybe Socrates was wrong.

Can we turn outward this
inward anguish,
or deal
with things
that are none
of our
business?
And when
they
scream,
"Death to traitors!" I'm the
first
to cry
out, "No!"

But step quietly
over my body,
When you walk out
the door.

It hurts,
and this is the only reason I cry,
to see a pillar meltway.

Your desert temptation
was fervent and effective,
and now you walk away.

You turn around,
With a kiss on the cheek,
To a tortured, dying man,
Whisper, "Goodbye."

My dear unwanted visitor,
Come join me, here, for tea!
Pry into corners of my heart
Don't bother asking me.

Infest my mind and reasoning.
(One sugar lump or two?)
I've been too busy, here, of late
To keep ignoring you.

Take all my joy and happiness
As crumpets for a meal;
Pieces of wisdom like a cake
Devour 'till you're filled.

And for my hospitality,
You return only this:
An imitation, cheap and small
Of Love, compassion, bliss.

I know you'll never stay for long
Here in my parlor fair,
I never know when you'll return
To grace the empty chair.

And now, you leave my sitting room
And leave a bitter taste;
I'm left to sweep up crumbs of truth
That you had left to waste.

Untitled
Joel MacCaughey



In the middle of his road, a dignified young man
Came upon a small child, curled and melancholy.
When he asked her why she grieved, the little girl replied,
"I have sinned. I've stolen something."
The little girl then arose, brushed her dirty clothes clean,

And disappeared into the darkness.
Later on down his road, the dignified young man, now an eminent individual,
Came across the same little girl, now a grown woman.
The eminent man contemplated if he should talk to her,
After she had been so cold. But his pride burst, and he asked,
"Are you still in grief?" The grown woman stood up.
The man then noticed the woman naked and bound in chains.
For a moment the woman was silent, but the silence of her mouth shattered,
And she replied, "I am a sinner, but now I live with my choices."
The woman then picked up her hefty, rusted chains
And walked back into the shadows.

At the end of his road, the eminent man, now an old, wrinkled man,
Saw a box; on the box was a letter from the woman.
The letter said, "I never received redemption for what I stole."
The old man lifted the top off the box and looked in. Inside was his heart.

Magnolias

Tanya Lane

Emily was truly the fairest of them all. The dark midnight blue of her dress contrasted nicely with her moon-kissed skin. Surveying herself in her father's mirror she drank in the tiny hourglass figure that was supported by two shapely legs hidden under a pool of material. A mass of dark curls cascaded over slight shoulders, mimicking the tears spilling out of the thick-fringed sapphire spheres. The tears that fell ever so gracefully down high cheekbones and past soft full lips dripped daintily from a delicate chin. These tears were the only hand-me-downs Emily had ever known. They had been cried many years before by a similar beauty that was once the belle of the ball. Now she sat in a rocking chair and stared soulessly out of the window, remembering. Emily looked at the product of that figure and, as the reflection returned her solemn gaze, Emily, too, remembered.

Emily remembered the dinner two years ago that tasted of all the things she loved in the South. Fried chicken and sweet corn bread, fried okra, buttermilk biscuits that peeled into layers so light they danced with the breeze, and mountains of mashed potatoes beside a bowl of gravy. To Emily these were the true tastes of home. These were all set forth in her mother's china that bespoke the best of spring. Trimmed in gold, each dish held in its center a perfectly replicated magnolia with petals milk white, causing fingers to itch with the desire to touch it. Though they were beautiful and definitely her favorite, they made Emily quite sad. Their immaculate beauty was forever trapped in that porcelain, their tender brothers and sisters allowed to sway gently in the wind, while they themselves were confined to the gravy bowl, tea cups, and soup tureen. Emily felt that it was their beauty that was their vice. Their beauty made them untouchables and therefore trapped them in a porcelain world, clean and fragile. It was also their beauty that made them sought after by men and envied by the other flowers, but left them completely and utterly alone. Passing a mirror Emily fixed a stray curl and headed to the porch.

She spied her mother sitting in the rocking chair. She

had not been the same since Emily's older sister Charlotte had died for reasons unknown. At least it was unknown to the doctors. Emily had seen enough to know. The intense silent fear that replaced the prenuptial joy in Charlotte's eyes, the hard unyielding figure that kept Charlotte from visiting home or anywhere, and the closed casket funeral to hide the purple and blue smudges on her arms, face, and head, from the eyes but not the heart, were reasons enough in Emily's mind.

"Mama," Emily did not wait too long for a reply. Her mother's words had been coming less and less these days.

"Mama, dinner is about ready and we're all gonna sit down."

The silhouette stood and walked over to Emily, her stare fixed on an elusive point in the field. Emily tried to follow her gaze but saw what she always saw: magnolias softly swaying in the breeze. She sighed as she looked back towards her mother, immediately startled as she noticed the ice blue orbs, so much like her own, were now fixed on her person. The acute sorrow was more intense than Emily had ever seen, so sharp and so deep Emily hesitated to register what she was seeing etched in her mother's face with a word that seemed too small to hold the true meaning of her mother's pain.

As she reached out for her daughter's face, Emily's mother sighed.

"My poor, poor Emily cursed with her mother's beauty." The air stood still for just a moment, stone locking glacier as they both shared an understanding. Just as swiftly as the moment occurred it was shattered as Emily's father, captain Holston, entered with an expletive.

"Emily!" As he spotted her, he charged their way and Emily watched as her mother's eyes turned cold. Emily watched as her mother shrank back into herself, closing the door on her way into her soul.

"What are you doing?!" The Captain continued shouting, not even acknowledging his wife's presence. His wife knew he had stopped seeing her when the first silver strand emerged and the laughing eyes bred crow's feet. She began to close the shutters.

"The Colonel is here and you're keeping him waiting! Now git on in there!" He did not wait for a response, expecting that his commands would be carried out as they always were. This time was no different. Emily and her mother quietly followed him into the house, Emily putting on her guest face, her mother now tightly hermited inside herself.

As they sat down, their ancient visitor stood, his greedy eyes snatching glances at Emily's every move. Every flit of her eyes, every movement of her long gentle fingers was not missed by the Colonel. A small, scaly tongue protruded from between two twin slugs, cracked from baking in the sun. He knew the Captain had described her as beautiful, but she was beyond beautiful. The Colonel lusted after the youthful glow on her cheeks and even found the inquisitive tilt of her head as she feigned interest in the men's conversation adorable. As each moment passed he grew more and more in favor of the deal he and the Captain had arranged.

Emily, too, noticed the Colonel. She felt that maybe he had visited once or twice before. Her father always had his military friends over for a brandy and cigar in the study, but she could not remember him inviting them over for dinner, and she could not imagine why he chose this man. Aside from the rotting odor that escaped his mouth every time he revealed the golden brown remnants of his teeth, the straggly thinning hair that seemed to be disappearing by the second, and the dry folds found on every inch of visible skin, he had the manners of a boar. Emily was constantly repulsed by his slurping and his seeming inability to chew with his dry, bulbous lips pursed together. He had no manners to speak of, reaching over any and every one to get whatever it was he desired. She would be glad when he left. She had just started reading the novel that lit the fuse of the War of Northern Aggression. She had to return it before her father found it because he would surely tan her hide out if he found her reading such ignorant propaganda.

Emily carefully removed potatoes from her plate uncovering a petal here, a leaf there. She marveled that such a beautiful flower would be used for such mundane tasks; that their beauty was used to decorate a plate, such a utilitarian object, and not a tapestry or curtain, both much more fluid, much more similar to the way a magnolia should be. But instead, the magnolia was stuck in the ocean of white china, cold and unfamiliar, like a magnolia bloom in winter.

Finally, it seemed as if the meal would end. Captain Holston turned to the Colonel and received a nod. As he cleared his throat and wiped his mouth, a dark hand quietly removed his plate from in front of him.

"Emily," he said addressing her for the first time that night. "As you know we've run into some trouble since the war." Emily knew things had been different since the war, but was not quite sure how bad

the damage was. She nodded slightly, wondering why he was telling her this. As he continued, the Captain spoke.

"Well, the Colonel here's decided to help us with our money troubles." Emily's eyes flitted to the Colonel to give him a gracious smile, but her stomach turned at the covetous leering expression she found directed towards her.

"Thank you Colonel," she mumbled and quickly averted her eyes so he would not see her revulsion.

"Emily, he'll be doing this in return for your hand in marriage."

As Emily's mouth fell open a scream exploded into the atmosphere packing the room from wall to wall with a sorrowful wail of outrage. As Emily gasped for breath and clarity she saw her mother, still screaming, leap towards her father, scratching his eyes and his throat. He tried to grab her hands, but they seemed to have multiplied. The incomprehensible screaming slowly began to contort itself into language better understood by men.

"You will not do this again, y'hear me?! You promised! You promised! Samuel Isaiah Holston I will kill you in your sleep if you break your word to me, I swear it on your mother's grave! You promised!"

The red handprint on fair skin and the tinkling of shattered china was the only evidence that he had moved. Emily's mother picked up the larger pieces of the plate, noticing that although the magnolias were broken, they were sill trapped in their porcelain world.

"Woman, I know what I said," he bit out. His voice had become low and metallic, a voice both Emily and all those Union boys had learned to fear. Shaking himself he turned back to Emily.

"You won't be having to get married 'til you're old enough. I say about two years." That last line was directed towards the Colonel.

Emily remembered her mother growing deeper into herself. She remembered that from that day to this every prayer was dripping with murder and death for the Captain, the Colonel, herself. She remembered relishing each breath of freedom while simultaneously despising it, knowing that the breath of life she cherished today brought her closer to tomorrow.

And tomorrow had come.

Looking in the mirror Emily remembered days without tears. Emily knew this day would come and that its presence would cause her existence to cease. She picked up her daddy's razor from the dresser, noticing its sharp edge. Emily heard the hurl and reel from

downstairs, the laughter and gaiety of her coming out party. Coming out today, getting married tomorrow. Emily put the cool blade to her cheek and sliced the first layer, letting the blade slide deeper into her skin, the connective tissue loosing, opening up the flesh, blood beginning to stream, mingling with the tears. Emily moved to the other cheek, creating a beautiful lace pattern, feeling the pain and reveling in it, feeling she had finally found a pain to match the one in her soul. Criss-cross red followed the metal blade across her forehead, gashed her chin and then, in a quick movement, sliced up one wrist and then the other. Emily looked in the mirror and felt that she was truly the most beautiful of them all.

Emily's mother died that year and the Colonel removed his support. The Captain turned to drink and the plantation became overrun with weeds and vagrants. Some of these vagrants claim to have seen a petite figure on the porch of the house beckoning them to come closer. If they came to the house the sapphire blues would harden as an icy smile shaped the soft full lips. A red 'x' would appear on her head and it is said that if she kissed you, you would choke on her blood or yours, who could tell, and join her in the house of twisted beauty and magnolia china.

The gray gets swallowed by the sun
as warmth replaces all those stabbing knives
that pierced my cheeks as to continually remind me of its supremacy.
The fragrance reminds me of days passed,
now—only vague memories; infrequently seen.
Water meanders endlessly as if it were saluting the sun for its heroism;
for delivering it from gouging ice and idleness during all too silent, solitary days.
The trees stand eminently and seem to be enwrapped in heaven as the breeze gently tickles its many arms.
Everything around whispers as if to say "Listen!"

Pilgrimages

Randy Compton

I.

As far as the east is from the west,
so the grimed and foul are far away.
Praise God, this is paradise!
Mile upon mile without asphalt,
blacktop, concrete, or steel: Only golden
avenues and whole interstates lined
with diamonds. Heads not tails, cast
your bread, give and it shall be given
this *is* paradise; it is good; they like it.

II.

Through the morning's clogging insect whine,
the pack-full, pick-laden lump moves through
green fields, sighting on distant peaks, consulting
a map every so often, knowing the big strike
is just around the corner. He spits once, licks
dribble off his chin, and homes in on glory
hallelujah. Sighting the proper rock formations,
shaking and tapping his pan over the riffles,
he steers alongside the rapid, heavy water just
past the thumping, booming rapids. Head down,
he ignores the falls, the pure spray of thuds
and shrieks carried by the river from under
the altar before the white throne of God.


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Ordering Out

Kevin Brown

Inspiration doesn't come like
a club sandwich, available for
the asking; if it does, someone
always forgets my request to

omit the vegetables. Most of
the time, though, I get a steak—
rare, not even how I like it. Or
someone brings me a bowl of

soup or some sort of pasta dish
or even something exotic, like
escargot or calamari, but
definitely not a club sandwich.

Inspiration is like breakfast in
bed; it comes just the way I like
it, just when it's least expected,
but just when I need it the most.

What a strange creature
it is they chase
that they are all looking for
though they know it is quite difficult
to hide, with distinctive markings.

What a strange creature
it is they chase, pounce upon,
clasp their hands over violently
as over lightning bugs
only to slowly and nervously open them
to find, upon closer inspection,
they have in their haste caught only
mules, horses, or similar
common animals.

But this one, it's clever--
hard to keep caged, finds ways
to break barriers.

Other people are unconcerned.
They sit reclined
smoking perhaps
and thumbing through the newspaper
where they read the article
then mumble something about
how things that are exotic
only thrive in sweaty Africa
or in the belly of orange jungles.

Then they keep thumbing,
unaware of what grazes
in their well-trimmed backyard
before moving through other fences.

Quilt
Bethany Stanfield



Dancer

James L. Johnson

Mirth and Joy
Dancing in the rain
Brown waves twirling
In the light
Arms outstretched
Embracing the clouds
A laughter and beauty
So moving, so secret
I stand, awed by the sharing
Honored by the sight
A simple, amazing moment
Immensely moving
Childlike innocence
Sheathed in a woman

A Vigilante's Plight
Knox McCoy

The cry of 95 come alive
As Martin's heart becomes my own
As one foot on my throat
Keeps me down
Without a sound
An unquestioned authority
Unmentioned depravity.
But how do you bite the hand that feeds
That keeps the flock, that plants the seeds?
What middle ground is there,
When you forsake the ones forsaking the world?
How do you expose this spiritual machine
From which there is no heel to bleed,
They who breed mindlessness and ignorance
Not enlightenment, not understanding?
Demands replace lessons;
Pleas replaced by ransom.
George and Aldous, your voices echo.
Now I understand the stories you told.
Now I understand the stories you told.

I have diabetic hands that shake when I don't feed them.
They hate abstract fabrics—pain equaling profundity in silk that
tastes like Sweet 'N Low.
My fingers go for corduroy instead, and scratchy sequins and weak-
old beards
that tell my hands it's okay to be smart AND happy.
Yesiree, nothing but complex carbs and pulpy orange juice for
them, boy.

They've already tried eating "right"—and iceberg lettuce and Plath
just don't taste the
way they did when my hands were on a health kick and my brain
was up for exhaustion.
My hands have given all of their Diet Coke away to the people
who want to be "real" poets—
Let them munch on their carrot sticks of big vocabulary.

My hands like to scrape themselves over Donna Summer's gold
platform boots and the
cookies sandwiching the cream of an Oreo.
Because they don't want to be the hands of an academostar
anymore.
They are bookin' it, yelling "Texture-or-Bust" into the wind that
blows them back, unable to catch their breath
As I run.

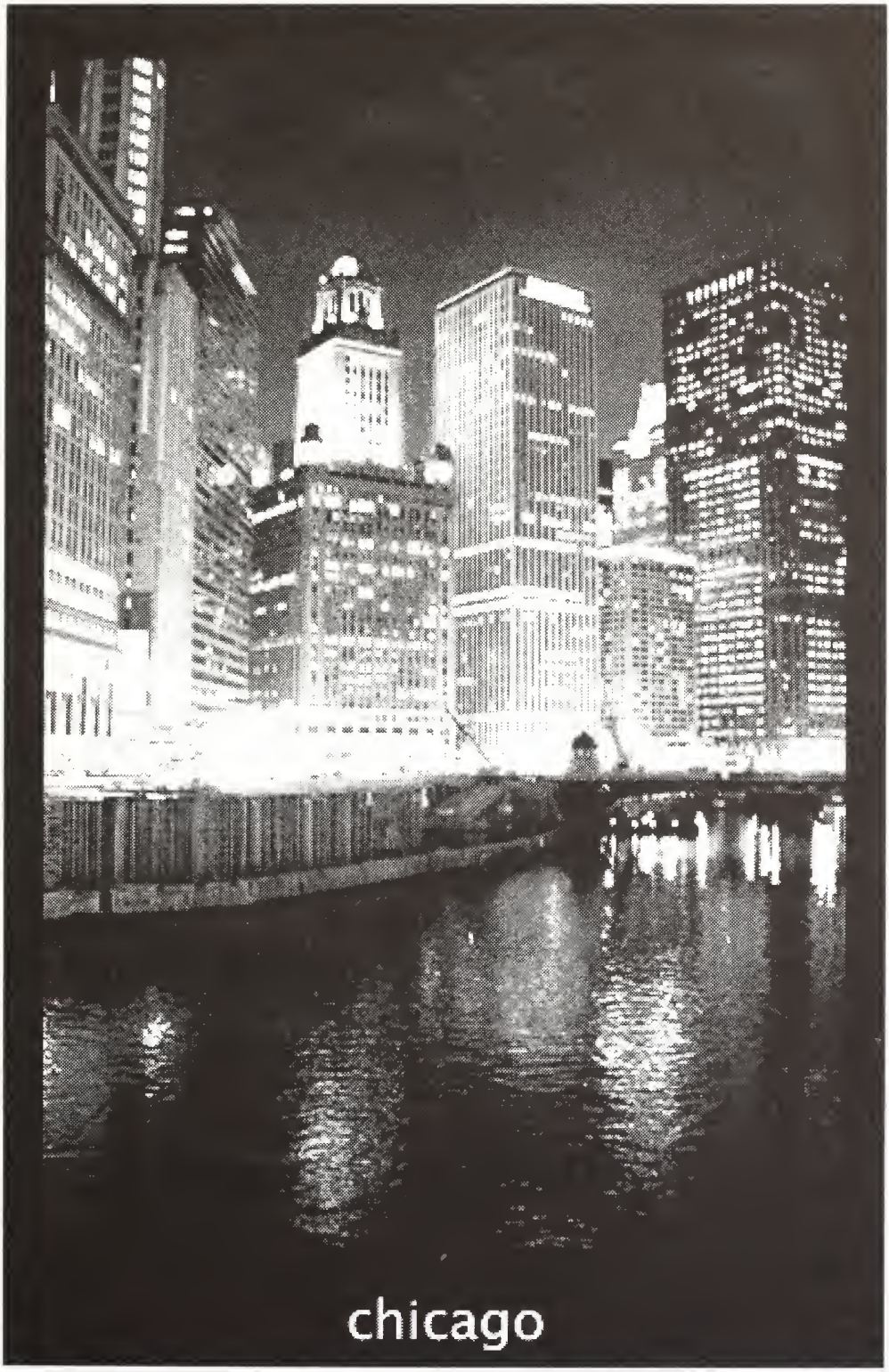
Chattanooga

Virginia Bell

Smiling like a wide-eyed gypsy cat
You glow in the dark and
Spring at the most unexpected times.
You leap from behind trees until you surrender
And bare your teeth--your grin broadens
And I curve into your open mouth.

As I wind down your throat the warmth
Squeezes, pushes until I'm swimming through
Your veins--your very heart--
Flowing, pumping, dangerously—sweetly—
Gentle and strong.
I find you shriek in street preaching,
Purr in a corner violin.

I scale your belly on
blue steel bars that assure my safety
until your sleepy eyes darken and
your shadowy, mountainous jaws yawn and clasp
down on me. Momentarily, I am afraid…
But then you smile.


chicago

Memories of a Princess

Jessica Doyel

My father keeps a small photo cube in his office. Baby-faced grins develop into spaghetti smiles and goofy faces. In one particularly accurate photo, I don a Kleenex box on my head, endless beads about my neck and capes draped around my shoulders. In later years, the Kleenex box transforms into a princess crown and the cape into a royal robe to match my deep blue and gold, layered skirts. Memories of the afternoons spent atop my reindeer toy-box, with piles of dress-up clothes at my feet, continue to prompt more childish smiles. The thick and painted smell of the wood clings to my memories and transports me back inside one fairytale after another. However, by the time I reached my climax as a princess figure, the reindeer/pony had gone on too many adventures. He retired, after many antler patchings and years of bareback riding. I have kept the costumes safe (with the memory of my beloved horse), believing that they symbolize more about my personality and life view than I am ready to admit.

In previous years, my hair served as my own princess trademark. I refused to cut it any more than was necessary for a healthy trim. My mother would spend hours brushing my hair. Every morning, the "princess" would awaken and stroll downstairs for her breakfast. Afterwards, Mother, the brush, hair bands and endless patience would accompany me into the living room. I sat on my coffee table "throne" while she patiently sat, weaving my long locks into a French braid. This happened every morning, and every morning I complied. The moment I fussed about the difficult snarls and snags in my hair, mom would return with the scissors. The mere suggestion of losing my locks served as a sufficient threat. The result: immediate submission. I loved my long hair. In my dreams, it allowed my prince to scale evil towers and would strike even the purest heart with envy as it billowed behind my horse. It was an essential element of my fairytale life.

These elements—my hair, my clothes and my jewelry—would often accompany me away from my household "castle." My younger brother and I must have been quite a sight on many

occasions—him in his green, felt dinosaur tail and me in my endless princess garb. My brother was the only replacement I could find for my retired "horse." I would command and lead him around—at least until the dinosaur grew older.

Looking through the books of my childhood, I always seem to find the plaid cover of a very special edition, the writings of a very young author. The purple and black striped cover contains the loops and squiggles, carefully penned before I ever learned to write my own name. Readings of this story (to my patient mother) changed continually—the "words" altering to fit my desired ending for the story.

The alluring stories of my childhood are intricately woven with tales spun by my mother and my grandmother. As far back as I can remember, I've spent hours wishing to be like them. Teachers by profession, their households reserve special times for reading. No Christmas Eve is complete without their stories; evenings are not spent with the televisions for company—the oral traditions of their childhoods carry enough furious activity! Each bedtime hour is sealed with a special time of reading; the fairytale books with glamorous pictures slowly giving way to long, junior novels. The nightly routine: my brother, sister and I crowding onto the large, comfy bed to listen to the thick Chinese accent pouring from my mother's lips, mimicking the storekeeper in *Cricket in Times Square*: "You got cricket—very good! You got cricket—very good!" For one chapter every night, the dizzying adventures of *The Hobbit*, and all of the characters in the *Swiss Family Robinson* are recounted through intricate speeches and giant gestures. Long after her retirement, Grandma continues to read to the third grade classes of Grant Elementary School. While times have changed, the stories have not. These are "the Grandma classics." Hearing her tell them now somehow manages to take me back to those magical lands of my princess days.

Grandma's house is the sanctuary of my childhood memories. This is the land of my fairytales—my retreat. Walls of movies and labyrinths of hidden toys—some older than time itself, fill every room. "Treasure hunting" in Grandma's house always leads to new adventure. Upon discovering two different video copies of The Little Mermaid as a five year old, I became numb with anticipation. The first was the familiar Disney tale; the second

depicted what my grandmother called "the original story." *The Little Mermaid* stands a heroine above all others—her red hair and handsome prince confirm the plan envisioned for my own life. Imagine my surprise when instead of changing into human form to claim her wonderful prince (as in the Disney portrait) the mermaid is scattered among the waves as sea foam! This second ending was unacceptable! According to my pre-existing knowledge on mermaids (which was quite thorough), the mermaid was supposed to have her prince, a wonderful wedding, and sail away under a rainbow, with her father's blessing! Smooth sailing for that princess—that's what is supposed to happen.

I remember that my father used to call me his princess. Maybe that is where the whole fascination with this story and my own royalty began. I'm far too old for that now. I guess I grew out of the title "princess" when I was around eight years old or so. My sister carries the name now. As the baby of the family, she may hold it forever. She takes it to the same extremes, perhaps, that I did. She will form her own fairytale. No mistakes on the part of the writers—she will send them all to the guillotine! Jennifer will command her own ship, chart her own course, and create her own fairytale ending. When she rides off in the sunset, there will be a soundtrack—and it will be exactly what she wanted.

I wonder if I will create my own fairytale ending also, or if the princess side of me died off with the old title. I have grown up now and realize that life isn't always as simple as I once thought it to be. As much as I like to influence my future—my ending—I am beginning to see how much of my path has already been charted. Has the plot already been completed? Have the characters already been chosen?

Will I ride off under a rainbow or be scattered among the waves? I so desperately want to control my own ending that sometimes I disregard any other authors of the script completely. I wonder if I am still scribbling furiously in that purple covered book—loops and squiggles filling the blank pages, trying to make sense of the life that is unfolding under my careless hand. Will my life's ending be that of a fairytale, a Greek tragedy, or a comedy?

I suspect that this is the reason that I have kept such a child-like appreciation for reading and for fairytales. I know that

I am not the only one—chick flicks could never be this popular without us—the former "princesses." I keep my favorite books, my classics, the scripts of my childhood, with me. They are the books that accompanied me to college, not thick volumes of research manuals or sets of encyclopedias. These are the books that connect me with the reality of my childhood. Either that, or they give me the courage to write my own reality into that script. Past and present stand together here. I love to finger paint, to daydream, to run through sprinklers and to imagine that I am queen of my own universe. A princess with red hair still exists and still runs the show—at least in my mind and in this story.

The ending is still changing—the characters keep evolving. Where are the endless loops and squiggles going to take me this time? Another draft may be the only way to find out. Keep writing—keep dreaming. Fantasy may become reality someday. As long as I keep living—making my own reality, forming my own story—I can complete this winding tale. With newfound understanding, gleaned from the previous pages, perhaps I will form the courage to live "happily ever after."

Heavy-Handed
Merinda Simmons

Beneath a church with God-colored
Windows and careful statues, a
Skirt the shade of unhealthy grass
Holds a sleeping Italian baby.
Eyes small and dark and tired
Ask for a hard day's anything—
For progress
For accomplishment
For pride.
Life's what it is, Lady, and if I could
Give you a shiny desk in a clean office
And a pair of professional navy pumps, I would.
But a couple thousand lira instead—
Does that buy a *National Geographic*
Photo of your beading sweat that
Might look like tears if I can just
Use the right shutter speed?
It would impress even Brokaw.
Two thousand will let
You [relieve yourself] in a hole twice in Florence.
It's a steal—two trips to a restroom
For your face forever.
I'll even say, "God bless you"—
Make us both feel better—
You can hope he actually will,
And I can clear my conscience
In this hellish sun.
That's it, give us a—well,
Don't smile too much.
I want Brokaw to buy it.
Look a little lost.
Tilt your head a bit more towards your child.
Dirty angel, true mother,
Rest with an infant's head in one hand,
Two thousand lira in the other.

Number 587
Robert G. Waycott

Mysterious Love
deafen us by your silence
give us ears to hear.

We Are
Timothy Carter

We are two souls,
But with one God,
We each have two hands,
But one touch,
We are two lips,
But with one kiss,
We are two flames,
But with one fire.

Soft October Night

Hannah Matis

I have seen her, the Cumaean Sibyl
Her face blasted to sag and bone
Perched crab-like in the maple limbs
Like a parody of youth.
She scribbles the future on the red hands
Of the leaves, long distraught strokes
Like heart-lines. Prufrock's yellow fog
Curls round me like a shroud.
The leaves blow through my fingers.
I do not understand this wind
This tender buoyant breeze
Ruffling the shaggy heads
Of the flame-clear maples. Stroked,
They awaken like ginger tabbies
Rustling their profound dryad-speech
With its promise of the inimitable.
A train passes, its cry a keening,
Murmuring over the tracks.
I do not understand it--
This kiss before dying.

The rain is falling down,
And there's beauty all around
As the sky turns grey.

As the rain falls to the ground,
It washes out the sounds
Of this less than ordinary day.

And I can feel You around me.
Simply Your presence restores me, again.

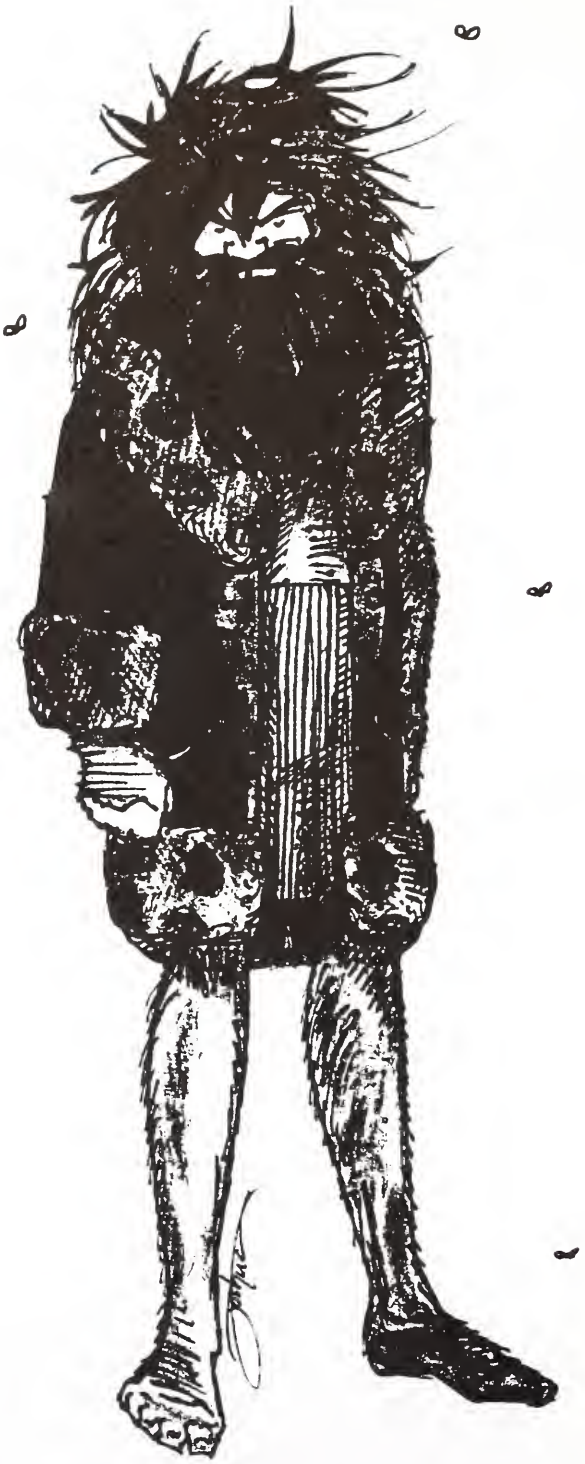
The rain combs through my hair.
It leaves me not a care,
And I'm at ease.

This is how Your presence feels.
It's water that can heal,
And bring me peace.

So when I feel You around me,
I know Your power will restore me, again.

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Modern Day John the Baptist
Joshua "Robitsutsu" Leavitt



Forever is the night that holds us in its hands, so dark and yet so light, mechanical at times through a completely chaotic universe of uncontrolled perfections.

Splendid are the stars, little gateways to dimensions uncharted, fortified by power in all aspects of their glory, blistering with energy of unacquainted science.

Paradoxical are the movements of particles and matter in such a random order to create the perfect being.

The paramount of astronomical clarity, the moon is seeing everything; under it we live our lives knowing that it knows.

Like a majestic sunrise, we await what adventure we will embark. Like a perfect sunset, we take turns exploring the enigma that is Earth.

The Mountains
Dr. Charles W. Conn

The pilgrim was a jaunty lad,
The guide was old and gray;
They passed beyond the pleasant plains
To where the boulders lay,

Where rose the earth to meet the sky
In peaks that dimmed the day,
And stretched as far as the eye could see
In rugged disarray.

As they approached the troubled ground
I heard the pilgrim say:
"What lies ahead of us, Dear Sir;
What lies ahead, I pray?"

To which replied the kind old guide,
As wise as he was gray:
'Tis mountains rising high and wide
Across our passageway.'

"What are these mountains we behold,
What are they called, I pray?"
These are the Everlasting Hills
That stay with us always.

"Whence come these mountains to us, Sir,
Whence come these peaks, I pray?"
They come to us from God's own hand,
His handiwork are they.

"Why come these mountains to us, Sir,
What purpose, Sir, have they?"
They come that we may learn to climb
And persevere and pray.

"How painful are these mountains, Sir,
How perilous are they?"
They shall not stop our journey, Lad,
But measure us they may.

"What shall we see from these great peaks,
What vision, Sir, give they?"
From them we see Forevermore
Upon a sunny day.

"What lies beyond these mountains, Sir,
What lies beyond, I pray?"
More mountains lie beyond them, Lad--
More mountains all the way.

Bathsheba
Eric Biddy

If you had seen her there,
bathing in the Jerusalem sunlight:
my passion, my sin,
my love, my redemption--
you too would have, on the instant,
learned the language of angels
and you too, on the instant,
would have learned the ethics of desire.
I saw her, wrapped in the early sunset,
hair cascading pearls--
and for a moment I couldn't believe
in crowns and decay,
but only in the movements of that solitary dancer,
ballet of water, pageant of the dying sun.
I loved her,
and as the world sank below rooftops,
we stood alone under stars
dim fallen by an ascending moon.

Henna Hand
Lisa Davis



Her Cadence

Marissa Garmon

Her little feet go pitter pitter pat
--pink dots of pigment clinging to her toes.
Her daddy's soundness comforts her always.
She clings to him with chubby arms unscathed.

She does not know his body's human flaws,
But doctors tell him life may take a turn.
This baby, answered prayer, comes to his mind.
Her cadence beats straight through his poisoned blood.

As weakness jolts through veins and pulls him down
his body's measure seems to slip until
her toes once more with blushing, broken stain
beat wieldy pitter pitter pitter pats.

I wrote you off a long time ago,
Sealing in watercolor
And hoping for rain,
'till words ran like hydrophobes
and I got lost in the (shuffle, crowd--?)
the trackless blue depths--
--so like your eyes--
of my sangria flute.

Dehydrated back into autonomy,
Now I list;
I remember your pedantic tone
When you corrected my Spanish,
As I quoted you Neruda,
Called your first kiss
The most disgusting thing you'd ever done--
Then asked for more of both.

There's more;
The list was longer in my mind.
But apathy is the ear
 that crickets sing in,
And I never have recognized you in pictures.
So who am I to write you now?
You, a parking stub on my windshield,
And it'll rain soon.

Rembrandt's Portrait
Elisabeth Schirmers

I'm tired of writing.
But he left me a note, after class,
And here I am at the corner coffee shop
Feeling guilty for getting something to eat.
And I haven't read it yet.
Since I don't know if I want to read
I thought I would write.
Maybe the warm pangs of soothing
Slips
Of Cappuccino will coax me to read
And wake me enough to spell.
My stomach feels surprised to have something
To do.
First like my heart's surprise
To find proof of care and thought possible.
And I am tired of writing.
The fake flowers on the table are ugly
Imitations
But they convince me.
The woman who sat alone is gone.
And I thought her important enough to write about,
Though she'll never know.
Maybe when my Cappuccino comes I'll take
Slips
And smile in remembrance of reading
Rembrandt's portrait.
There was no whipped cream on top
Or lid.
I let it go by but asked for cream
While the madness cooled.
But he left me a note.
It weighed down the table until I reached for it,
Like a child towards a hot stove.
And the Cappuccino made me warmer.

I'll never write again.
I want to be an imitation, or a woman
Who sat alone.

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Picture Perfect?

Kimmie Harrington

A solitary picture shows a solitary subject,
a self-portrait, a confessional, a photographic time
capsule showing more than the subject cares
to show. She smiles,

a false front for the camera, whose omniscient,
uncaring eye captures the skeleton of her essence,
printing the negative of her soul, each curve edged
with darkness,

each color inverted. All matter becomes grey matter,
and light becomes emptiness as the lens reverses life,
X-raying bones brittle from overexposure to emotional
ultraviolet rays.

Inside the dark room (the red light district), the picture
gives birth to the ghost of an image beneath a pungent bath,
a chemical baptism developing spirits and shadows.
The technician crops

and retouches, filtering filmy life through a telescopic
lens, eliminating red-eye to print a personal candid—
the subject is photosensitive, for still life is always
photogenic.

Iris
Elisabeth Schirmers



Girl
Kylie Machacek



Dark Ides
James L. Johnson

chittering, chattering
gossip in a tree
neighborhood secrets
flocking on the wing
fluttering, flapping
sharing everything unseen
what dark evil have they
seen on this
Ides of March
Do the freshly dug pansies
hide something more?

Rain
Knox McCoy

Rain, rain
Did you see me today?
I watched closely as you
Greeted me this morn this way
How I envy you
Falling like feathers
Decorating the ground
Kamikazes of weather
Inhibitions unfound

Monkeys and Peanut Butter

Joseph Tag Abbot

Monkeys and peanut butter have many distinct contrasts, such as their edibility, ability to communicate, and living habitat. This topic has drawn much interest from the public in the last several years, so the discussion of monkeys and peanut butter will undoubtedly receive great reviews from around the world, both in this time and in times to come.

First is the issue of edibility. The peanut butter and the monkey are both edible, so this is more a matter of good taste. While peanut butter goes well with many different foods, such as crackers, bread, small children, etc., the monkey does not go well with anything at all, it seems, except maybe another monkey. But what if the peanut butter were applied directly to the monkey? I can imagine that this would bring about a rather tasty snack.

I must say that even though monkeys are ever so popular, I fear that peanut butter has it beaten in grocery sales hands down. The average American household does not even have monkey in the kitchen at all—no leg of monkey, no can of monkey, no freeze-dried monkey, and no monkey-burger helper. But at least 90% of American households carry peanut butter. This is viewed in some countries as prejudice towards the monkey.

Second is the issue of their ability to communicate. Many people in the past have studied the way monkeys communicate in the wild and in a controlled environment. Studies have proven that monkeys are very intelligent creatures, and they can communicate with one another. Monkeys communicate using mostly hand gestures, body movement and noises.

The peanut butter does very poorly at communicating with other peanut butters. In fact, no communication is seen at all. For hours, and even days, the peanut butter will sit in a room with another jar of peanut butter and never even move. A conclusion was drawn at first that the peanut butter is very rude in nature, but in the end it is obvious that the peanut butter is just not able to communicate.

The monkey is the better communicator of the two. Even

when the monkey and the peanut butter are put together, the monkey will try communicating with the peanut butter. It may seem that the peanut butter is, in fact, communicating with the monkey, but it is merely the monkey throwing the peanut butter around the room.

Lastly is the issue of living habitat. The monkey lives freely in the jungle with other monkeys. He prefers the outdoors, with many trees and fruits to feed upon. A monkey cannot be contained in a small area for very long. He is destined to live in the wild, and that is where he should stay. Any attempt to change the monkey's living habitat could prove fatal.

Peanut butter, on the other hand, usually stays in a cupboard in the kitchen of most houses. This is where the peanut butter is free to be itself, in the dark corner of a cupboard. If someone were to change where the peanut butter would stay; however, it would not matter at all. The peanut butter will do fine just about anywhere one chooses to put it. Peanut butter seems to show little or no concern towards the place of its dwelling.

These are some of the many distinct differences between monkeys and peanut butter. While testing is still being conducted in some areas between the two, these are the facts. Monkeys and peanut butter are very different.

Shakespeare's Sister

for Tennessee Williams, after The Glass Menagerie
previously published in *The Pedestal*

Wesley Biddy

The flicker of rain outside
is a torn film reel licking
the windowpane, hurling grotesque
images at the wall opposite
my torn stare: a bucket of tongues.
Paper ghosts murmur,
Blow out your candles, Laura.
And blue. A wilted stench.
What is there to say?
We are Siamese cripples—
you, a limping princess hung from happenstance,
I, a lotus-eater, my pockets full
of bent keys and stained glass—
praying that our biographies
will be stanzas of glitter
rather than encyclopedias of rust.
The music box across the alley
churned out paradisal serpents
while I danced for coins
in a red coat and fez.
Many were charmed, some seduced, but none fooled.
None but you, dear sister; you I deceived.
The story isn't supposed to end
with Hansel fled and Gretel left
to face the blind Cerberus alone,
but I was afraid, sister—
the yawning belly of voracious flames
and seventeen gentleman callers
gone before us—
so afraid.
If you get this, Laura, write to me.
I can no longer dream in color.

Redemption Series

Nani Hesterly



Whitman and Wordsworth Meet at an Intersection in New York City

Kevin Brown

The world is too much with us:
cell phone symphonies score our
movies, meals, and mountain hikes;
freeways and thru-ways are every
way we turn, rendering trees, seas,
and anachronistic leas as nothing
more than background for the
latest photo spread for anorexic
women and androgynous men
filling in the gaps of our lives;
advertisements pop up where neighborhoods
used to reside, as billboards block the
moon, urging us to consume multitudes,
forgetting what lies within us.

Great God! Can you hear my
barbaric yawp over the cacophony
of horns honking at humanity
trying, trying to progress?

Waiting for Future

Jonathan Wilson

Matted carelessly
Cloaked in sweaty shadows
Illuminated by seasonal lightning

A sweater here
A jacket there

My legs folded curiously
Shaped like 4

Musical accompaniment for a rainy night

Cold, dark, forlorn halls of anticipating kids
Waiting for the future to arrive
And kill the rain
Kill the cold
Push their lover into their arms
Inspire a story to tell their grandchildren
Assign a journalist to write their obituaries

Yet my legs fold (like 4)

Looking through strands of jungle hair
Repeating patterns on the floor
Open closet doors
Dirty socks
"Happy B-Day" bags

Fast clocks that still cannot catch time
Double-decker beds
Cold, lifeless, hard walls…white like snow (like purity)
Me…folded, leaning, listening

Future is not audible
Only through pitter-patter and sirens
Bells and organs and phones
Here all is silent

AH!
Or is it?

Thoughts scream and dance (rain dance)

Droning from the wall
Footsteps in the hall

He missed future
We all missed future

An Ode to a Pansy
Ashley Soule

O radiant, mosaic emblem of creation—
your bold royalty dances
'round the edges,
while yellow brilliantly bursts
from within the core.
You cry out to me for a frozen moment—
with beauty emanating,
gripping me tightly
forcing me to respond
to your Creator.

School Lunches
Nicole Macaluso

My child
Please uncover
Encouraging words
Written by your mother.
Smiley faces marked with love
And your angelic name
Artistically drawn.
Do not be afraid
You are beautifully
And wonderfully made.

Asleep one night upon my bed,
A brilliant thought possessed my head;
I stirred awake and pondered that
A thought so clear, so grand, so great,
Could come to one asleep in bed.
I knew that I should rise and write
This wisdom that had come by night;
But, reasoned I, the thought would keep,
And soon relapsed into my sleep.
But while I slept, my thought took flight
On phantom wings and sped away,
Disdainful of approaching day.

My thought has not returned to me,
Although I've sought it wistfully
Throughout the range of human lore.
Who knows what marvel might have come
From genius that once came to me:
It might have been the music score
Surpassing Verdi's *Trovatore;*
Perhaps a high and solemn hymn,
Exceeding Mozart's *Requiem;*
Or some dramatic masterpiece
Commencing where Prince *Hamlet* ceased.

It might have been some plot or plan
To elevate the state of man;
Some science dropping truth on me
Like Newton and his apple tree;
It might have been some wiser view
Of life than even Plato knew;
Or some deep doctrine, more profound
Than Augustine or Calvin found.

It might have been,
It still might be!
Life's greatest thought once came to me.
'Tis pity it both came and fled
While I lay sleeping on my bed.

May 25, 1980

Bird's Nest
David Albala



Easter Sunday (for Wes)

Dyana R. Herron

Your absence wounds this morning--aches
like a tear in the tender side
of our city—
crippling birds
who warble chinked aubades
in place of breaths that someone doesn't take;
A crowned head dips, it
tilts and nods
while prayers arch like bridges, bend, but do not break.

Pausing on the corner that eventually parts
us from St. Luke's, each step an
unfermenting, turning wine to water,
we are at a loss: you are not
here. It is a gash
our heaving city suffers, further mastering the sad arts—
child carving melons, the grave that bleeds,
the garden filled by human ash,
the houseless with their chocolates and left-hand markered hearts.

Last winter, wordless mouths stuffed brown with roots,
we, again without you, scaled
the frozen face of a black mountain
to watch the stars hurl themselves
towards Earth like reprobate
angels, insinuating celestial imperfection—an attempt at truth
about heaven and injury:
the saints flinging down their candles, irate,
towards white deserts that yield flame, and fodder, but never fruit.

We suspected that you did not sleep:
insomnolent, restless
as the pristine princess nestled
atop one hundred silk mattresses,

a pea-sized affliction,
dense as marble, lodged in the base of her spine, bone-deep.
Your same sort of delicate sense,
more biology than conviction,
was surely irritated—barring all dreams from your keep

so that, wide-eyed and seeking light,
you—once baptized in beauty—
neared the source of those waters
again as stars penned
lines across your cheeks
that soaked your bedclothes by dripping from your chin, tight
paths ripping across
your face in quick streaks
too hot to be tears (although you say you sometimes cry at night).

So we called to you: speaking your
name into the void, sending it out like a dove
into the gutless dark,
hoping it would return
clutching feathers in its beak
so that we could be certain—so that we could be sure—
(white ones like those
you sprouted for weeks)
we, who do not mistake saint for savior.

Now we wade through puddles of flower heads,
dislodging them from gutters,
imagining guillotines fashioned
for the execution of perfect roses--
and it is as if the earth has suddenly shed
some color, a certain shade of blue,
as quickly as bloom closes
to frost, as soundlessly as fever falls and spreads.

But white ribbons are tied to a young girl's wrist, and bells
sound as the broad mouths of bleached
lilies kiss all altars
in celebration of He who left
in a shroud of thunder but returned
as quietly as a gardener, and Who tells
what veils and pages
might be burned,
what water drawn from what wells.

And last night's dark, a bruise on our hope from
the broken black vein of fear,
has been dispelled--
the taper brought back,
the tears all dry
then sprung and dried again. He'll come,
we said, and then this sky—
unending smear of ruptured plum—

will soften into blue.
But, brother, where are you
on this morning of most holy risings?

The Past is Heavy
Marissa Garmon

The past is heavy, but it is mine
and I will tread in winter drifts uninhibited
I will find my way and take my time

When slow thoughts of hearts I cannot find
creep in like snow, I'll melt and say
The past is heavy but it is mine

When friends are near only in gust from behind
I'll step from my shelter--
I will find my way and take my time

When lovers' lips for whom I pined
come calling again--I'll sweep the pain for
The past is heavy, but it is mine

When childlike virtue seems so hard to find
I'll tread through this squall and tell you once more that
I will find my way and take my time

So now, though you squirm from the depths of your mind,
You have to remember those who follow behind and
that the past is heavy, but it is mine
I will find my way, taking my time.

Great Oak
Leara Nicole Morris




Glo - ry, Ma - jes - ty Lord you are more than Eve - ry - thing to
me You are God Cre - a - tor of all that I have known A
Fa - ther whose love for me Was Shown in your son The on - ly sin - less one who
died that I might live to know your Glo - ry, Ma - jes - ty Lord you are more than
Eve - ry - thing to me No tongue can tell No eye has ev - er seen your match - less
face No hu - man mind could e'er Con - cieve the full - ness of your grace the
splen - dor of that place where we will live for - ev - er in your Glo - ry, Ma - jes - ty
Lord you are more than Eve - ry - thing to me.

The Great Celestial Tragedy

Jakob Ogle

It's dark
but if
the moon were out,
the stars would be less bright.
They could not dance in the sky.

It's dark
but if
the moon were out,
the world would be so clear.
Every tree would have a halo.

I serve the wounded healer.
Steadily I shuffle along the valley
Carrying a staff, limping patiently
Eyes pursuing the face of
My healer.

The thorn grows deep, still
Day by day I cry out for His touch—
One finger extended
And placed on my side
Would heal my wound.

My eyes grow heavy,
Tears are released
As my body curls inward,
My chin drops—
I seek to know the purpose of
My pain
That weighs my heart down
Like a brick
Held up by brittle bones.
But I walk on,
Staff firmly clutched in my left hand.

My thorn grows deeper still,
It penetrates to my very core.
With every breath
I'm made aware
Of its existence.
"Determined to remain faithful"
Is read on my brow.
I lie in solitude
Until

The Spirit gently whispers
"Come."
Lifting my
weary chin
I see the outstretched hand—
Scarred from the nail
Driven in,
And look into the eyes of
My wounded healer.

Ode to Joy

Hannah Matis

"Les enfants seuls savent ce qu'ils cherchent." Antoine de St. Exupens

For you I wandered the glimmering reaches
Of twilight roads, with silent step and eyes gazed blind.
For you I stumbled through liquid tree-shadow
Down banks of moist black earth and moss,
Ropy hemlock roots and knuckles of granite,
To drink that clear cold stream with its speech of frost.
For you I became a connoisseur of constellations,
I chronicled sand dunes, I flung songs over the sea.
I stared doors in the air with sheer willpower.
I rapped the backs of closets, praying fervently
To feel the scratch of licorice-black branches
The pristine miracle of moon on snow.
I hung upside-down until I trod the piercing glory of the sky
And the ground arched, suspended, above me.
I braided crowns of flowers that wept and wilted,
I so nearly flew.
For you, exquisite, excruciating ache
Springing from the eyes of this fellowship of orphans,
All this knocking, summoning, conjuring, pleading
To grasp that from the heart of beauty
Something cries my name.

Beyond the Night

Daniel C. Tidwell

Huddled now in hidden fear,
We crouch around the light,
Unwilling that we should disappear
Beyond the dreaded night.

When did we miss the power
That fueled this dying flame,
The source, the hope, that brought us life,
That urged our souls to change?

Somewhere lost, somehow forgotten,
This power to shine through tears,
Was slowly replaced with stale complacence
That threw away the years.

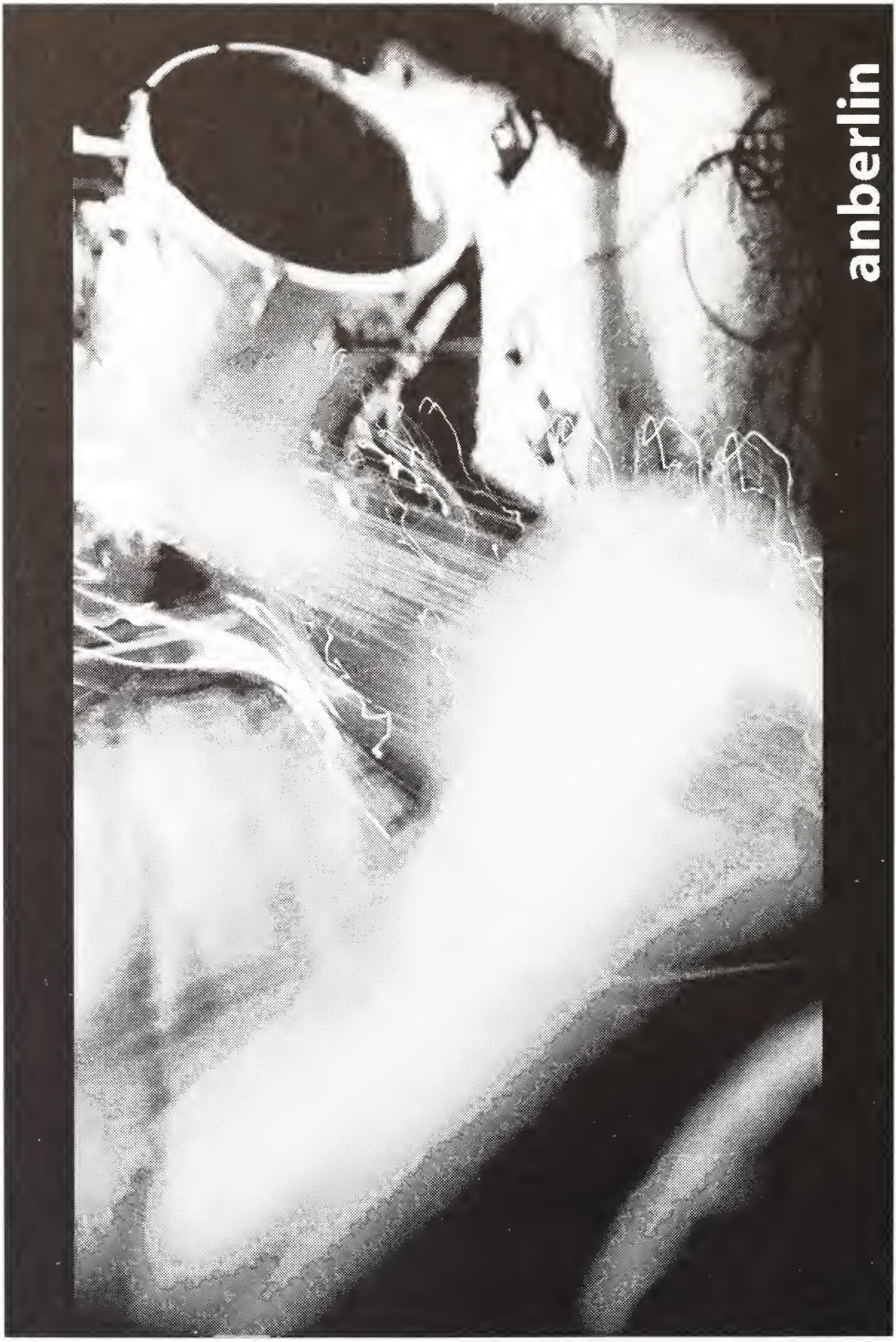
So we cower and we wither,
Grace and mercy growing dimmer.
Could our souls be lost forever?
Or can we still turn back?

Free to dance and full of flight,
Our hearts once filled with hope,
Did not know the flame would dim,
Or nights could be so cold.

Can we fly beyond the night,
Away from passing pleasures,
Finding life through God's true light,
Beyond our empty treasures?

Did we not learn, when set aflame,
That life was for the living?
To hide the light would quench the fire.
This love was made for giving.

The flame of life will fade and flicker.
It is not worth the straining.
The light of hope within will shine,
Untouched by foolish waning.


anberlin

Have We All Grown Horns?

Blaine McLaren

Many years have poured my heart into a drooping mess that
knows no good nor evil
There is no tree in my garden and there are no apples
Only a forgetful sun that drains my life each day
I dance for rains, but the gods have all died
Like me
Have we all grown horns?

I cry for an Exodus that never happens and I lie under lonely signs
The garden is not a womb, but a vice
It's cold inside of hell and the smiles smell like hate
Love once made me feel young and hard, but trust made me
unkind
Flowers make me sick
Have we all grown horns?

After my years of unloved passion I see life as dead
I crawl through the winters of mind and scream for peace
There is no peace, there are no gods
There is nothing real but You...
Have we all grown horns?

Milk, Bread, Ice, Beer
Samuel DeRusha

Joe had no idea he was going to commit a crime until he pulled into the convenience store and stopped by the gas pumps. He almost asked himself why, but he wasn't sure what he was asking why about. Why do I want to rob a convenience store? Or, why did I have no idea until this moment that I was going to do it? A better quesion was how. There was no plan.

It was two in the morning. Stan was snoring. He had been asleep for several miles, dosed by the whiskey, and by three days of hard work. Joe looked over at him, took a cigarette from a pocket of his leather vest and lit it. Stan stirred a little and settled back down. Joe pulled on the cigarette and exhaled. He rolled down the window to let the smoke escape and read the neon sign. Milk Bread Ice Beer. He looked around for other cars at the pumps or parked near the door. There were none. He knew what he had to do. He would walk in with no gun or anything and just ask for the money. They had joked about how easy that might be if you go to a clerk who just handed over the money without any fuss. They hadn't been serious, though. Joe thought he saw a man behind the counter. His name was proably Patel or something like that. He got out of the truck and stretched, pulling on his cigarette again. He walked toward the door of the store with the stiff gait of a man who has been sitting too long. Halfway there, he tossed the cigarette in a puddle and watched it hiss out, reached in one vest pocket for another and in the pocket for his lighter, stopped, lit his cigarette, returned his lighter to his pocket, heard it click against his phone, and then walked to the door. A chime sounded when he walked in. He walked around the tub of ice holding tall cans of beer and went straight to the counter. The man raised up from arranging something under the counter.

"Can I help you?" the man asked. Joe almost said no and turned around. It was a kid.

"Yeah, sure, give me all your money." A kid was working the cash register. Why'd they put a kid in here?

The kid paled. But he saw no gun and Joe was smiling, sort

of.

"But I am here." He smiled back hesitantly. He tried to laugh as though he too was in on the joke, but he coughed instead.

"No, really," said Joe.

The kid looked at him. He wasn't trying to smile anymore. He looked at the brown truck by pump number two then quickly back at Joe. Still no gun. He knew the cameras were rolling, he just hoped another car would drive up. He kept his hands visible. Joe's also were on top of the counter. Joe saw the kid look at his hands. He dropped his cigarette on the floor and put his hands in the pockets of his vest. The kid glanced again at the truck and saw the shape that was Stan on the driver's side.

"Your friend?" he asked.

"What about him?" Joe said, keeping his eyes on his face.

"He's leaving," the kid said. He could see what Joe couldn't since he wouldn't look: Stan behind the wheel looking into the store.

"Don't try that with me, punk," said Joe. "Give me the money."

It was like a very slow boxing match. The feints were fooling no one but seemed to be some kind of game of trust. The kid froze, still looking out at the brown truck.

"Are you goin' to give me the money?" Joe said.

He looked back at Joe. "I don't think you're a robber."

"Why not?"

"You have no gun. You don't really want to rob me."

Joe paused a moment. This kid was quick, clever. "It's not you, man, it's the store."

"My friend has one," said Joe.

"One what?"

"Gun."

"But your friend is asleep." The kid could see Stan back on the passenger side.

"I know."

They looked at each other for a long moment. The kid looked again at the truck. He was looking for something. An answer to a question. Then he said, "If you will not be alarmed, I'm going to reach under the counter and get my drink."

"Well, I think that would alarm me so don't do it." Joe paused, his hands still in his vest pockets. "You thirsty?"

"Yeah, my mouth is dry, I'm being robbed."

"I can understand that. I'd be nervous too if I was being robbed."

He turned to the tub of beers. "Want one of these?" He popped a top and set it on the counter.

The kid looked at it a moment and then said, "No, not while I'm working."

"You're not working, you're being robbed."

"Then I'd rather have my tea."

"No," said Joe. "That would alarm me." He dug deep in the tub and pulled up another beer. "I'll have one," he said. "That one's for you if you change your mind."

The kid rang something up on the register.

"What're you doing?" Joe asked.

"You just bought two beers, and this is my job." He waited to see what Joe would say. "I'll just leave it like this for now, in case you want to buy something else."

Joe took a long drink, his eyes never leaving the kid. "Mind if I smoke?"

Without waiting for an answer, Joe lit another cigarette. "I thought you'd be an Indian, you know, from India. Or a Pakistani. Or something."

"Well, I'm not."

"I can see that."

Joe saw a book lying by the cash register. He pointed at it with his beer. "What's that?"

"Can I pick it up? Would that alarm you?"

Joe blew smoke toward him. The kid picked up the book and turned it so Joe could see the cover. It was a translation of Arabic poetry. Joe looked at the title, then back at the kid.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Jeff."

"You gay?"

Jeff didn't flinch. "No. You?"

"Moslem?" No answer.

"I'll be paying with your money," Joe said. "Just deduct for these two beers, have one on me, and give me the rest."

"Sir, now you--"

"Don't 'sir' me. I work for a living."

"Where do you work?"

"Polite, too. Or just a smart --- wanting to get hurt." It wasn't a question.

"No, just making conversation."

"You take me for a rookie at this stealing thing, doncha?"

Jeff shrugged. "You come in with no gun--" He left his sentence unfinished.

Joe swallowed the last of his beer and stuck the cigarette in the corner of his mouth. "It's my first time," he said. His voice was lower. "My first time."

The kid stood, mute. Joe blew smoke toward the door.

"This ain't yer first time is it," he said. Jeff shook his head.

"Once last year," he said.

"Only once? You're practically a virgin still." He laughed at his own joke. "Only once. And you're still here." Joe picked up the other beer from the counter and paced around to the other side of the register to look at the cigars in a box and the key chains hanging beside them that read "Jesus Saves" in blue letters on an oval piece of plastic next to the black and white ones with a stock car on them.

"Bet he had a gun."

Jeff nodded.

"Why are you still here? Somebody held me up, it'd scare the s--- outta me."

"I like working nights. Gives me time to read."

"I can read." Joe read the key chain. "'Jesus saves.' You don't buy that, do you? I mean, Jesus ain't here to save you tonight. What if I have a gun in my inside pocket?" He thrust his face toward the clerk. "Who you believe in?" he asked.

Jeff shrugged, raising his shoulders and eyebrows at the same time.

"You're just like Stan," said Joe. "Think nobody knows what you're thinking."

"Here comes your friend," Jeff said.

"You ain't fooling me," Joe said, forcing himself not to look at the door.

The chime sounded. Stan walked in yawning. "What in the h--- are you doin'?" he asked Joe. "Evenin'," he nodded at the kid, who inclined his head in Stan's direction.

"Just talkin'," Joe said and raised his beer. "Talkin' books."

"The only thing you read is labels," Stan said, and leaned back out the door to spit. He closed the door. He looked at the kid and then at Joe, then back to the kid. "Restroom?"

Jeff pointed to a back corner. When they were alone again, Joe said, quietly, "Okay, now, give me the money."

"He reads books?"

"Sure. He's smart. Too smart. Even likes ragheads. Just hand me a twenty."

Jeff smiled.

"Are you ashamed for your friend to see you stealing?" he asked Joe.

"No, man. No. Nothing like that," Joe said, whispering now. "Nothing like that."

"Then what?"

"It's just that--" Another car drove up. The lights shone through the front window of the store. When they switched off Joe could see it was a police car. He looked at Jeff.

"Listen jerk," he said, "tell me you didn't push a button while I wasn't looking."

"Button? My hands are here where you see them. I've been robbed before. I don't know where you might hide a gun and then shoot me. I pushed no button."

The door opened. In walked a state trooper, wiping his eyes.

Joe nodded, "Howdy," and cleared his throat. The kid did not speak but saw the cop looking round for the restroom and nodded toward where Stan had just gone. The trooper nodded his thanks and walked toward the red neon sign.

"That sign hard to see from the door?" asked Joe.

"I don't know. I never look at it from the door."

"Reads books, thinks he's smarter'n everybody else," Joe said to himself.

They stood in silence, Joe leaning on the tub of beer, Jeff looking out the window, then back at Joe, and keeping his hands conspicuously on top of the counter.

Joe said, "You didn't call for that trooper?"

Jeff held his hands up beside him, open empty palms toward Joe. "How am I going to call anybody?"

"I'll believe you. This time. But, if I ever get a couple of these under my belt, I'm comin' back for you."

The restroom door opened and the cop came back in their direction.

"So, where do you work?" Jeff asked so the cop could hear.

Joe turned from watching the cop to Jeff. He ventured the truth. "We been framin' down South Pittsburgh. We live up above Chattanooga."

"I see," said the clerk. "Industrial?"

"No." Joe answered. He spoke in short careful phrases. It suddenly seemed very important to tell the truth. "Residential. A house. People live in it." He paused. "Not yet o'course." He looked from Jeff to the trooper.

The cop laid a cinnamon bun on the counter.

"You want to pay for the beer?" Jeff asked Joe.

"Sure," Joe said. "I guess you already rung me up." He smiled at the cop and turned to Jeff and dug his wallet out of his vest pocket and handed him a five. Jeff took it and gave him change and rang up the cinnamon bun and the cup of coffee the cop had set on the counter. "Jesus Saves" glowed from the plastic key chain lying on Jeff's book of poetry.

Stan strolled up beside Joe. "You ready?"

"Sure." Joe laid another bill on the counter. "Regular in the brown truck," he said to Jeff.

"Sure. Thank you and come back." Joe raised his beer can in a wave. They walked out the door just ahead of the trooper.

"Not planning on driving are you?" the trooper asked and got in his car without waiting for an answer.

They gassed the truck and, Stan driving, pulled back out on to the road. Neither man spoke. The night got dark again as they left the glow of the store. A few miles down the road, Stan spoke.

"What was you doin' in there?" he asked. "Happy hour?"

"I might ask what took you so long in the bathroom."

"Well, till that cop came in I was listening to everything you said on my phone."

"What?"

"You must have hit a number on your phone sometime and called my phone. I heard every word you said. I turned it off when that

cop came in the restroom."

Joe pulled his phone from his vest pocket and dialed through the calls. Stan's number was first on the list. How many ways were there for a man to get in trouble?

"You weren't really going to rob that kid, were you?" Stan asked.

"Naw, man, I's just messin' with him."

"You sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. I don't even have a gun."

"No, you don't," Stan said. "But I do."

Joe didn't answer. They rode for home watching the headlights on the road and the mosquitoes and bugs coating the grill and flying up over the long hood of the Ford.

Ice.

Sometimes you are cold as ice,
burning me with your
careless incompassion.
I drown in the frigid waters
beneath your surface.
I try to reach you
but your feelings are numb
from the frost
in your own eyes.
My fingernails barely scratch
the iceberg of your emotions,
my own feelings trapped
inside the frigid flow of your soul
for as long as your winter may last.
At times I feel
you are as impossible to melt
as the frozen Arctic tundra.

Water.

And then the slightest touch
Melts my own self,
Your eyes a warm liquid
that soothes the pain
of the winter's chill,
the flame of your love
floating on the tears
as a candle drifts
down the dusky summer river.
But the taste of your kiss
leaves a salty residue
in my mouth as even

the clearest stream
is muddied by your
stubborn resistance.
Your bottled emotions
are shaken and jarred
until even a glance
causes you to boil over.

Vapor.

The once gentle rains
turn into a gale of passion
that evaporates my resolve
and envelops me
in the intensity of your desire.
The molten mist rushes over me,
incapacitating me of everything
but instinct.
The fervor of your lust leaves me
breathless,
and I am scalded by the broiling
steam that is begotten in the climax
of our longing.
I clutch tightly to this moment
that our dream is on fire,
holding it next to me as if it were
an incarnation—
a flame of memory to keep me warm
in the times when the cycle
of the revoking and renewing
of our love
has returned back to the beginning—
to the phase that all of our heart and actions
are once again
encased among a stone of

Ice.

Girl on Subway
Joy Martinez



A Wedding Guest

Farron Kilburn

I stole the ancestral quiver—sent flying desperate, defective arrows
While celestial gems sparkled in flashing smiles
I did not smile; I did not toss—
I hurled cranberries and walnuts.
It was I who tripped Hymen with his clammy hands outstretched
To pinch her winter cheeks rose.
No! No blushing! (Because I know!) Yet startling white
contrasts my black moles, tattooed satanic constellations.
Yes, it was I, I who plucked love's swan feather for feather—
Revealed her bald and tarnish-toned.
It was I to be Venus' fair child properly adorned in white yet
It is I who am spotted with tiny freckles of leprosy—
I who was cast out.

La peinture de ma vie c'est impressioniste,
et la musique que j'entends c'est classique.
Et moi, je rêve du temps perdu
et de tout l'amour que tu ne m'a pas rendu.
Et je sais que tu ne reviens jamais.

Je prie à Proust de changer ma vie,
mais il ne m'écoute pas; il est mort aussi
Et moi, je rêve du temps perdu
et de tout l'amour que tu ne m'a pas rendu.
Et je sais que tu ne reviens jamais.

Je réfléchis en mon passé.
Et je prie pour plusieurs années.
Il faut me réveiller du temps perdu
et de tout l'amour que tu ne m'a pas rendu.
Et je sais que tu ne reviens jamais.

Maintenant je connais très bien le realité
et c'est pas en mes pensées.

Thoughts on Chartres Cathedral

Matthew Melton

Carved in wood and stone these saints,
their hands together, muted receive
the echoed whisper, whisper
of the prayers, the little swollen
globes of lights, like captured
Faeries, candles dancing in
holy darkness, resonating,
pulsing like some giant corpus,
the organ breathing sonorously
within these colored canyons
made by men.

What need have visions to
ascend beyond the vaulted
arches high above; what
need holiness to assume a
face more glorious than the
prismed spread of lights
descending like majesty itself
from stained hands on stained
glass on angel wings of gold?

One look at all these vanishing
heights and impossible forms,
the symbols dead yet talking
still and you have contained
within these walls eternity
itself achieved—or a close
facsimile thereof—a space
more awesome than awe
itself, a god too big for
God.

And then I think with withered heart how my Divine is smaller still, not even to the level of the silent, singing ancient stones, these frozen passions writ across the times and lives of countless come and gone. These very rocks cry out to Christ in tones too high to hear.

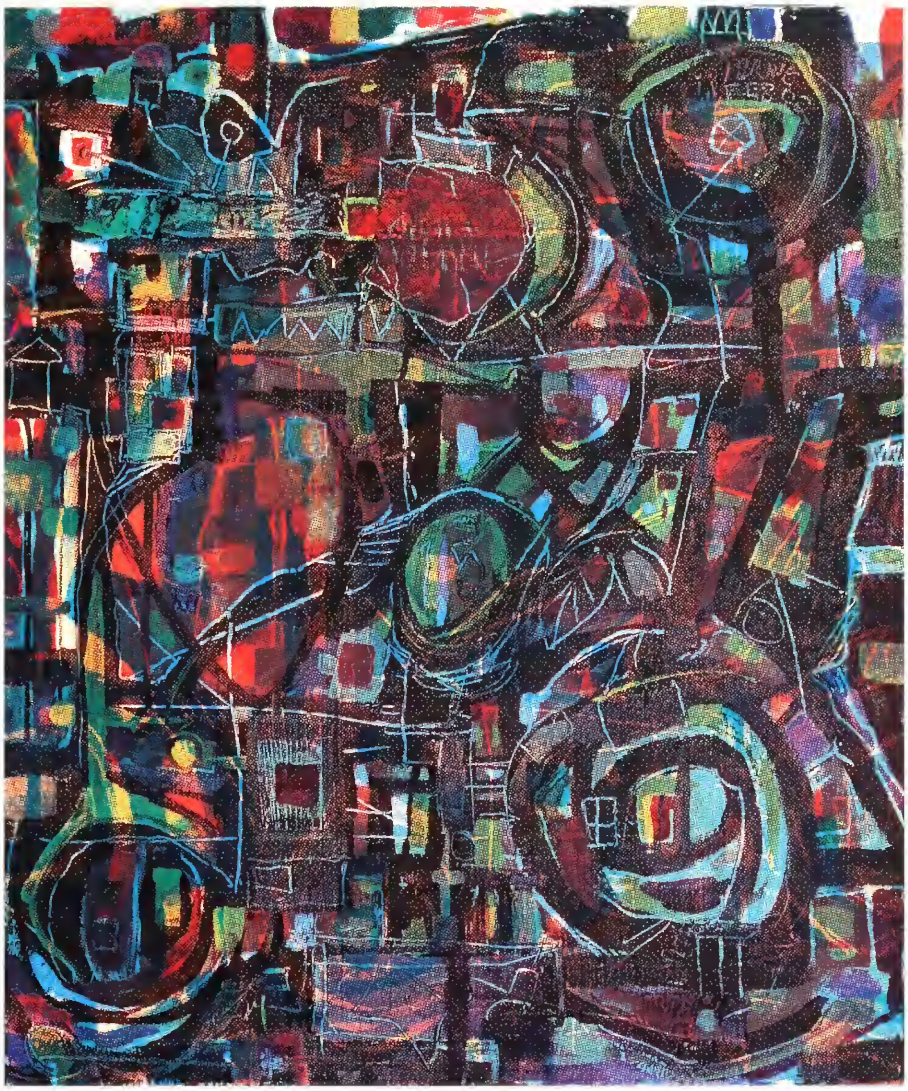
Power in the Calm

Zachary Jones

The sword was exquisitely wrought
and it danced as a butterfly in
the master's hand
as his footwork traversed
the well-worn track of training.
The blade danced a glistening duet
by his side, weaving a web about him
that sparkled as a spider's in the diamond dew.

The master himself, his body so fluid
as if he and blade were a river
rushing in tandem down a mountain
through raging rapids
and tumbling waterfalls.

And as the foot rested in its final step,
sword landing from its intricate
flight through the winds,
the master's motion paused
and ne'er was that blade
more strikingly lethal
than when, in that moment,
it was in stillness held.



Narcolept

Jakob Ogle

sing me to sleep,
tonight,
and I'll fall in love with you,
again.

"It isn't eloquence I'm looking for,
And it never was.
I'm sorry if I gave that
Impression."

be in my dreams,
tonight,
expectedly;
and I want to be thought of, too.
But I have faith that you're
already
thinking of me.

Verse Concerning Calculus (Which is Concerning Me)

Dyana R. Herron

A ship at sea once came at last
To a land upon a desert isle
As a six-foot-tall man all the while
Stood 'neath a sun set ten degrees
Behind three parallel coconut trees
To ponder length, from bow to mast,
Of shadow which the boat had cast.

I stood beside him, quite encumbered
By the lengthy task at hand.
I, hopeless in the shifting sand,
Tied calculators to my foot
And 'round my neck equations put
Then towards the tide began to lumber
To drown myself in a sea of numbers.

So many steal the sweet of sleep—tons
Etched upon my walls and posts—
That in the night the pallid ghosts
Of students' souls from classes past
Come proving how the letters last
With a certain sixth inked out in red
Upon a many-blistered head.

I've eaten several pencils now.
I've chewed them down to nub and point.
I fear my teeth will soon disjoint
And separate from bruise-ed gum;
I'll calculate (while teacher comes)
The speed they left—(with furrowed brow,
He'll watch to make sure I know how).

To calculate insanity
Might not be such a lengthy task
Compared to what the pages ask.
x to limit won't deter
A desperate girl from reaching hers.
Yet if my lot sheer madness be,
Differentiate implicitly.

The smells of grass and manure change after about three miles on
Old Tasso Road at night.
They become dirt and rain and warm laundry, and you see him.

He appears from behind a mailbox and stands in front of your car
as you drive up that last hill before turning into your safe
subdivision.

Your high beams let you see him—empty eye sockets and skin the
color of lime juice. He wears
a black robe—hooded, of course, and you think for only a tenth of
a second that he should carry a scythe.

Long, emaciated fingers lift as if telling you to stop, but you can't.
Something sounds like a sandbag
hitting tight carpet. Then your back tires run over his body that
doesn't quite seem like a body.

Your mouth feels like it just swallowed cold, fast wind. Your heart is
tight and clogged as if it were corked.
But who would go back for something frightening? You keep
driving, afraid that you killed him

but more afraid that he's still alive.

Fountain
David Albala



Something slithers, writhes, and flops
in my stomach,
trying to die.

--like a worm,
or a snaky temptation.
But it is a dream, I think.

Even when a reflective ball dangles
like an agéd, maimed obscenity where
pendant candles once shed
true light,
still,
all old churches exhale the same sweet damp breath.

It is like sitting
inside a young woman's mouth.

On my upper lip a bead of sweat forms.
I do not dare move.

Except to lean against the black baby grand.
My reflection looks tranquil in high polish.
I rest my elbows on the table's white linen,
offer my chin on folded hands.

When you look at me.
(Or when you fail to),
I study the black and white marble floor.
Or the omnipresent trinities of white pulpit lilies

Or your broad shoulders in black.

All is made clear here.
Or is clearly demarcated, at least.
Starched white shirts and black skirts
glide unconsciously to music.
They minister bread and wine on
silver chargers.
They incant through soft
hushes their litany of soft substances
to transform.

But I am unfit to partake.
The mystery is dying in my belly.
The candle on my table is lit,
but I am not the bride you have returned for.

Later,
after my alka seltzer toast to your
happy future
has turned to wormwood and bile,
has turned my lips to wrinkled chalk;
after I have spurned the white bridal cake,
spurned its red velvet
(red as a beating heart-be-still),
a voice so near my ear it seems a whisper inside
asks, "Would you have the groom then?"
"Yes," I answer—bold for once.

But your cake turns to dust in my mouth.

Something of a witch, they must have thought you,
With the alabaster flask slung around your neck,
The potion of dreams, your hooded, copper eyes,
The mysteries of your unutterable hair.
Beneath the veils of scent and shadow
Bottled like your perfume you were possessed,
Riddled with the seven demons of womanhood.
Primal as an Asherah, you were burning incense,
Forbidden fruit, unauthorized fire.

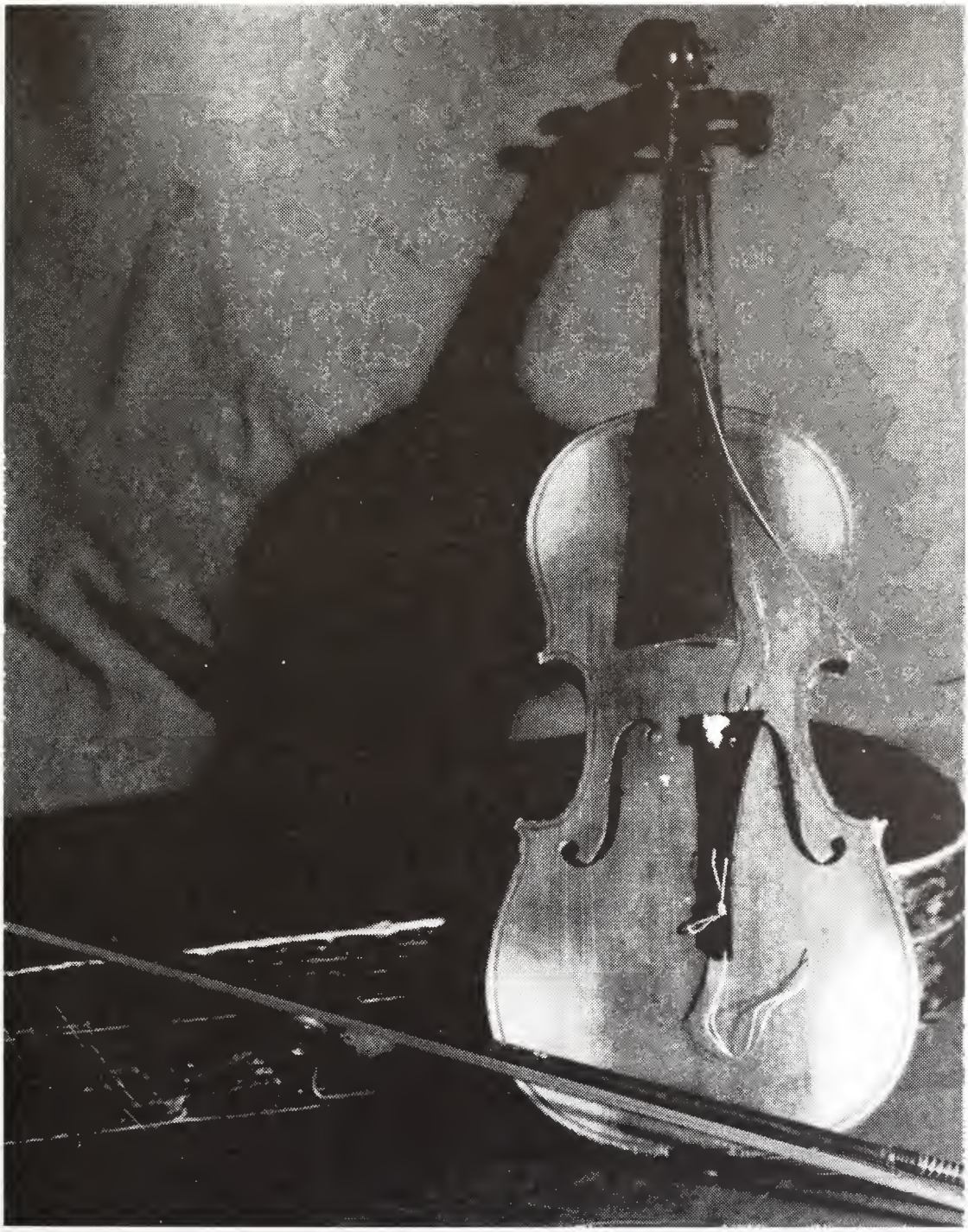
You must have looked a witch, too,
The night you flung yourself into that genteel dinner
In Simon's garden to pour your bottled, weeping soul
Out before the one stranger at the table,
Your scent, your mark, your very identity
Offered up with all the love in your fierce heart.
If you had cared, you might have noticed the stifled guilt
On a face or two, the veiled contempt for the man
Who said your name, and gently sent you on your way.
But you were long past caring.

Years later, you would stand in another garden
In the moist, green, desolate morning
With another flask in your hand and your mouth
Like ashes, thinking you heard the inevitable tramp
Of your demons returning.
And then the gardener turned, and called you "Mary."


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Faith Walk

Rhonda Faye Troutman

My savior and I were walking one day,
When we came along two paths,
I turned to speak with Jesus,
But He was no longer near to ask.
I scratched my head in wonderment,
"Now where could He have gone?"
But since He was no longer there,
I was hesitant to move on.
"Which path should I now take I wonder.
Which one will pass this test?
For I want to choose the proper one,
Or my life will be a mess."
I observed the path lying on my left,
I could see so clearly down it.
It held all of my wants and dreams,
And my every plan upon it.
"Surely I should take this road,
For these things are in my heart,
But maybe I should view the right,
Before I even start."
So I turned to face the right path
And fear now gripped my soul.
No longer could I see the path,
Only darkness did it hold.
"My Lord please give me back my sight!
I no longer see this road!
For where has gone your unwavering light,
Or the promises you bestowed?
For Lord along the other path,
Lies all we're hoping for,
There lie the many plans we've made,
All the thoughts to serve you more."
And then I heard a tender voice,
And I saw a nail-scarred hand,

"My child you have a choice to make.
Will you choose all that I've planned?
For child I have much more in mind,
Than what you've planned so listen,
Those were not my plans for you,
They were simply your ambitions."
"But Lord why until now,
Could I see the path ahead?
Now all I see is darkness there,
And the future do I dread.
But if this road you're showing me,
Is the path to tread upon,
Then I will walk upon this path
But where has its light gone?"
"My child, just be patient,
For I will guide your feet.
I will show you where to place your foot,
And you be careful not to leap.
Merely trust and put your hand in mine,
I will lead you on from here,
For I know the plans I have for you,
So you need no longer fear.
For the reason why it's dark my child,
The reason you can't see,
Is no eye has seen, nor ear has heard,
The plans I have for thee."
So then with faith I took his hand,
And let Him lead me on,
And never once did He let go,
Or steer and guide me wrong.
For I gave up all my hopes and dreams,
That day to walk with Christ,
But never once did I regret,
Trusting Jesus with my life.
And now I know to walk by faith,
And not to walk by sight,
And because of this both He and I,
Are each other's sole delight.

A Longing Undescribed

Steven Luke Hankins

When leaves have left the trees bereft
Of all their labor's fruit
I wander through the passing hues
And smoke the steel-sharp air.

Alone among the boughs, far-flung
Up to the bright-pricked sky,
I feel a longing undescribed,
And pause to feel the cold.

Then once again my thoughts begin
To slow until they freeze.
The longing I had touched has fled--
Abandoned, like the leaves.

I chase it through, as if it flew,
The lonely barren trees.
Yet this year's hunt will end the same
As every year's before.

The cold has caught my muscles, taut,
They strain to carry on.
The fire inside, and festal friends,
Call me from my pursuit.

Reluctantly, yet joyfully,
I turn toward the house,
And know that I'll be back each year
When boughs again are bare.

I will return when winter's burn
Will blaze within my limbs,
When leaves have left the trees bereft,
The lonely barren trees.

Numb

Ashley Soule

Deceit
Is disheartening.
Cantankerous to my soul
Weighing my mind down like a fractious
Anchor scrapping for release from
The ocean's floor.

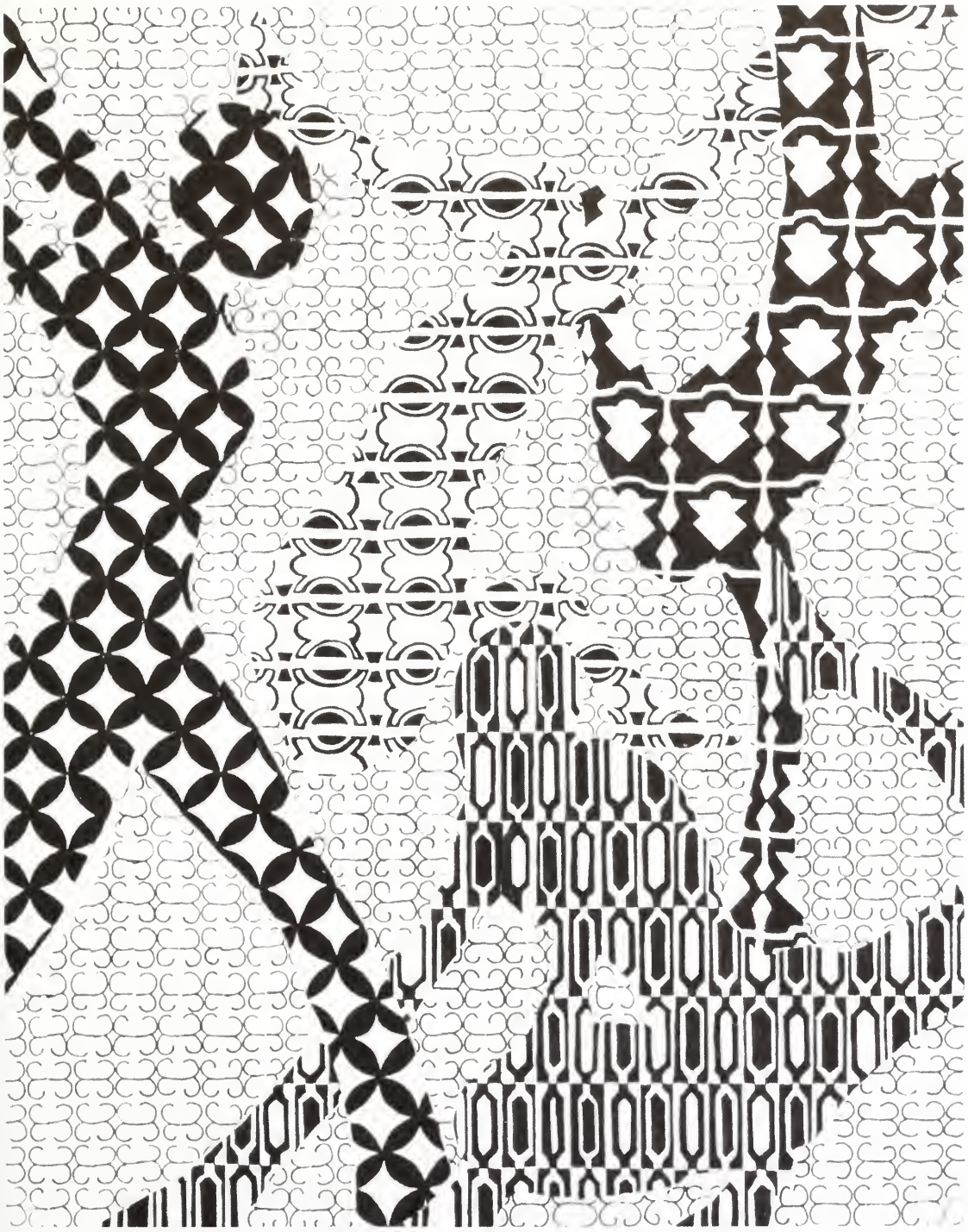
Seeking the surface,
I flail—
Frantically tugging to escape
The mask that I have
Secured
Firmly on my face.

The water is clouding—
Surrounding.

As I falter in
My designated part,
Pieces
Plummet
From my face.
The mask ruptures,
Exposing
My frozen features.

My Refuge
Desiree M. Rivera

Often I sit and wonder why I am
the way I am (I cannot help). But You,
Oh sweet Lord, my rock and salvation too,
Only You can save the life of this lamb.
Please deliver me Lord, the Great I Am.
Make my adversary my downfall rue.
My rival with his merciless hands slew
my hope and cast me away with the damned.
But from the abyss You have rescued me
from eternal torture and suffering.
Thank you Lord! No longer blind, I can see--
forever I will serve my holy King!
He redeeméd my soul! He is the key!
Perpetual praises to Him I sing!



Where I Go

Hannah Matis

When the moon is full
We know to run
Away from the guttering candle
Back to the wet black woods
Where the wild dogs go ranging—
Diana's hounds, with unblinking eyes
And long, long silent strides.
At my left the white wolf, wise
Grandmother with your bones of iron,
At my right the gray, my mother
Whose wounds are always bleeding.
You taught me, Mother,
Freedom's sharp, bitter blood-taste,
Your lessons were of shape-shifting
The nuances of the moon, the flux of tides,
The myriad ways to kill.
Beneath soft black boughs
Weighted thick with cold tears
We rip rags from the hemlocked air
And run.
Nosing, we slink, shadows among shadows
Pressed close to the damp breast of mossy earth,
Narrow flanks galvanized and heaving,
Anticipating the head upstarted, the wide
Tender eyes, the antlers tossing
As the first twig snaps.

My heart
is a stained-glass
window,
a beautiful kaleidoscope
that is easily
broken.
It delicately
tells the story of my life
within a framework
of stone.
When darkness
covers the light
that shines into my life
it does not change
the pattern.
It merely
makes it harder
to see–
both from the inside
and the outside.

My heart
is a chalice,
gilded in gold
and filled to the brim
with bitter sacrifice.
As rich as wine
and thick as blood,
it is offered
and drunk freely—
holy when blessed,
blasphemed when wasted.
Its atoning elements
can give sight

to the blind
and forgive the sins
against me,
but only to those
who believe.

My heart
is a splintered
cross,
an unwilling accomplice
to the death
of innocence
and reluctant
arbitrator of justice.
Heavy as a burden
and rough as bark,
it still weeps
when pierced
with jagged nails
of condemnation.
My paradoxical
symbol of life
and death,
even as I die
upon it
my soul is raised
up to the heavens
with the promise
of resurrection.

My heart
is an altar,
answering its highest call
when I am prostrate

before it.
Worshipped upon,
prayed upon,
cried upon,
and slain upon,
it is indiscriminating,
undemanding,
ever forgiving,
ever penitent.
Never forcing,
always pleading,
it cries out to all
who hear it—
come as you are.
And the answer
will always be the same.
I accept you, I embrace you,
and I love you.
Just as
I
am.

Untitled
Kylie Machacek

My fears rise and take the breath from my throat . . . I have not chosen to escape them. The emeralds in your eyes shine and tell me that I am no longer alone. The incense that flows from your lips smells of peace. Again, I remain entrapped by the soft touch of your hand to mine…I am healed. One gentle brush and my ailments flee.

You are good…
You are holy…
You are my healer.

Your smile twinkles in the moonlight and your eyes glisten. I see the silhouette of your hand reach towards me. Have me–I'm yours…completely. Take my every breath, take my every heart beat, take my everything. The love within you calms me and douses my fear. You call me on to more. I see there is more in your eyes…more than I've ever hoped for in this moon and these stars, more than I've ever found dancing at night on my pillow. Your hand holds more than this world offers me.

The Old Ball Game
Daniel Dickens

As the P.A. system begins to cry:
The fans stand to their feet,
The national rhythm begins to beat
And the mighty Colors take to the sky.

The crowd holds onto "home"
And then "of" and "the"
Before ending joyfully
On "Brave" as if some

Conductor on the field
Held the fermata for emphasis.
The audience is now an oasis
Of cheers and chants to be hailed.

The booth gives the batting order
For the turkeys of Hancock.
Followed by a knock, knock
On the microphone's shoulder.

To rally the loyal hometown fans
"Now starting for your own Struts:"
The batting order sounded like cuts
And clucks and rasping tin cans.

The Struts took to the field in blue
Hats, brown jerseys, a black belt,
And the tight prisoners' pants melt
With orange leggings down to the shoe.

The catcher waddles to meet an
Ostrich at the plate with a brush
And three balls in his clutch.
The infield begins to throw a tan

Ball from third to first, first to stops,
Short to first, first to second, and
Then second to first. Repeat the hand.
"TWO!" The powerful pitch pops

The mitt, the mask slides around,
The ball goes to centerfield.
"Batter up!" the ostrich yelled.
The pitcher toes rubber on the mound.

The coach stands and adjusts his feathers.
The old gobbler begins to strut,
Dragging an untied lace aglet
In the sand as it tethers

Half a sunflower seed shell.
He flaps a wing, signals the pitch,
And then mumbles "#*&!*@#*!"
As the batter escapes from the jail.

The next batter leaves on deck and glares
At the third base gobbler's spastic
Flutters, he understands by some magic
Signal to aim where he dares.

The ostrich moves his neck
To let him see the pitch.
Then he turns to scratch an itch.
"Ball?!?" The gobbler says, "What the heck?"

The old gobbler storms the plate,
He expands his dusty feathers
And flaunts his beard and spurs,
As his comb fills with fiery hate.

The short infield ostrich charges from
Second and stands still beside his
Fatter counterpart. He knows the call's amiss,
But stands firm, just as dumb.

When the gobbler drops "you" and
"*%@!*#!*@" in the same sentence
The ostrich flaps in two cents
Worth and points toward the stands.

On my family's summerhouse on MacMahan Island, in my grandfather's room, an ancient, yellowed black and white print of a seascape hangs on the wall above the bed. It's not a seascape in the conventional sense, however. There are no whaling schooners, no picturesque Maine coastline with a lighthouse or two, no evidence of humanity at all. It is a series of waves done in great detail, under an overcast sky. That is all. In retrospect, I wonder a little what made my grandfather choose that particular print for his bedroom. It may have been a hand-me-down from the house's previous owners, the last scions of the nineteenth century dynasty responsible for the maid's room and other antique vestiges of the New England Brahmins. But I would like to think a part of my grandfather responded to that barren space of open sea. The print seems so like him somehow—the free-ranging intellect who, in spite of the warmth that burst out of him at times, always seemed distant to his family, the man who served as navigator in the South Pacific and remains haunted by the action he saw in World War II.

When I was younger I loved the print because it is what I saw when I looked out the window every morning. Although it is not a photograph, it almost could be, with silver light gleaming on the millions of tiny ridges on each gunmetal-colored wave, the intricate texture of the waves within waves. I had had my fill of smooth aqua Hawaiian combers, with dolphins, humpback whales and hundreds of jewel-toned fish swarming around a coral reef. That was not the ocean that I knew. The ocean that I knew was rough and tough, steel gray or intense royal blue or olive-colored depending on the weather, and so cold even in July my mother had to watch for signs of hypothermia when I went swimming. The Gulf of Maine is not affected by the warm Gulf Stream, which heads up the Atlantic seaboard, glances off Cape Cod and travels thousands of miles to warm Great Britain; the water in the gulf of Maine comes straight from the Arctic chill of Labrador. In the winter if people fell in, they had a minute, maybe two, to get out before it was too late. The water was so cold it made my teeth

ache, and it had a wild coppery salt taste, a little like blood. It smells that way too—in Maine the afternoon breezes are brisk with the clean, fierce smell of open sea. The ocean that I knew was an animal—alternately playful or rampaging, a stallion let loose. It was not a comfortable companion to sun oneself beside with straw hat and Danielle Steele in hand; instead it made me want to climb mountains, or run as fast as I could down a straight road. In that picture on my grandfather's wall is a kind of freedom I have never felt anywhere else but on the rocky coast at home, when there is nothing between me and Africa but waves.

It is only now, years later, that I've begun to see the ominous side of my grandfather's painting. The ocean covers two-thirds of the print, almost swallowing the viewer who sits in the trough between swells. The sky is overcast, and the waves are menacingly dark, with a brooding look. More disturbing to me than the weather, however, is the utter *otherness* of the scene. Out on the open ocean, there is nothing man-made to give the viewer a sense of stability or even of scale; the waves could be five feet high or fifty. There is simply no way to tell. There are no reference points—only the flux of sea and sky.

Growing up near the ocean habituated me to its moods, so much so that, though I was always careful on the water, I never really feared it until I was a teenager. My blissful innocence may in part have been due to typical childhood illusions that I was somehow invincible or immortal; at any rate, such was my state of mind one October afternoon when, for the first time, I was genuinely afraid of the sea.

It was my uncle Matthew's fault, of course. It is an old past time in my family to blame particularly hare-brained schemes on my uncle, who is admittedly somewhat hare-brained himself. Matthew is an herbalist who lives in Maui, eats vast quantities of tofu, practices acupuncture, got himself carded at the age of forty-five when he tried to buy beer at our local supermarket, looks a cross between Mel Gibson and Jim Morrison and consequently has an endless succession of girlfriends whose nationalities range from Swiss to Japanese. (It is also an old family pasttime to read aloud the ingredients in his organic toothpaste.) At any rate, Matthew looked out at the gusts of wind freshening over Sheepscot

Bay and decided that what he wanted was to go for a sail. My grandmother and sister prudently begged off, but I, who was gung-ho for sailing in any weather, decided to tag along.

In October Maine rouses itself from its summer stupor. All traces of humidity evaporate and the sky becomes a hard, intensely dark enamel blue. The trees look as if God set a match to them—bright orange, rust, yellow, the blood red of the maples. Colors seem too vivid, as if they are being pressed out of things. There is a spice and a bite in the air one can almost taste, and in Sheepscot Bay the wind comes roaring up from the south—fresh off the Atlantic—in strong, hard gusts that whip the ocean into whitecaps. Our sailboat, christened *Vector* by my math professor of a grandfather, was only eighteen feet long—a pint-sized boat in which to face that brawling wind.

In the first fifteen minutes we had to take down the jib (the smaller, triangular sail) and continue on with only our mainsail, and even that proved to be too much. Sailboats naturally heel over with the force of the wind in their sails, but soon we found ourselves in a dangerously acute angle to a very choppy sea. Matthew and I held on for dear life and prayed that a gust wouldn't tip the boat all the way over. So much spray was flying over the bow I was soaked to the skin and freezing cold in the wind. Water was inches away from flooding in over our gunwale, and we could not seem to get the situation under control. Again and again we took down the sail and rolled it to make it smaller to give the wind less leverage on our little boat, and again and again I held my breath, a sick dread in my stomach, as we nearly capsized in the gusts. If we did capsize, I knew that we had a matter of minutes before hypothermia set in, and in these conditions, there was not much chance that a rescue could come in time. For the first time, looking down at the Gulf of Maine, only inches away, the thought occurred that the ocean could kill *me*.

Looking at my grandfather's painting, I see now that those waves could, in fact, be forty or fifty feet high. The ocean wields a terrible power men consistently underestimate to their doom—witness *The Perfect Storm*, a true story which took place very close to where I live. It is not that I love the ocean any less. The sea got into my blood at too young an age, and I love it obsessively,

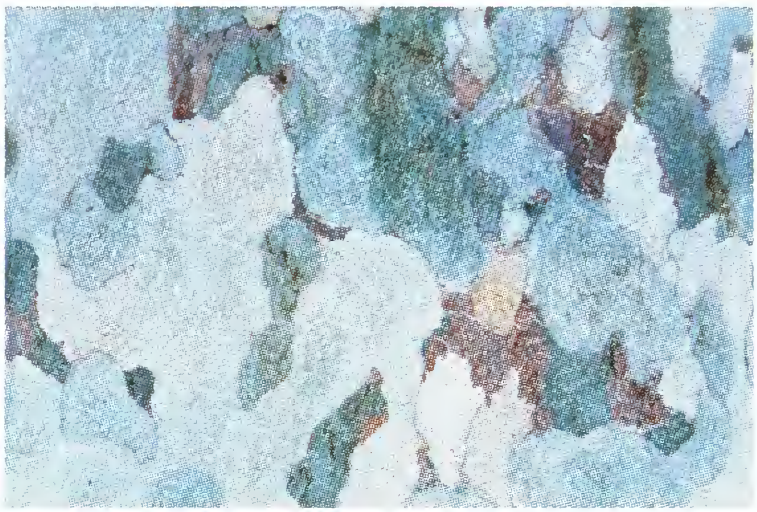
whether I will or not. It is, however, a love mixed with awe and a little dread, a love for something that is much greater than I am and that I cannot hope to understand. Out in the open sea is God's country, where man lives and makes a living only on sufferance. Out there, the world resembles nothing so much as the primeval chaos of that first day of creation, where only the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Decree

Randy Compton

So many seem to feel the need
for a fist raised to the sky,
but I
desire only inclusion in the blue—
not rudely forced by threat of fire,
a pyre
never consuming, but rather by an endless
pursuit: a hot chase through deep channels of the heart,
a part
of the plan, a grand design, timed quite closely to carry
all to its proper end, inexorably brought about,
no doubt,
by the elaborate patience of one with time to kill.

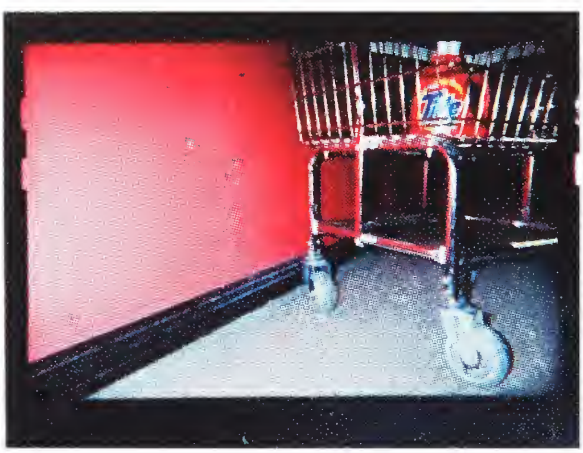
Bark
Nikki Sienkiewicz



Tree Frog
Nikki Sienkiewicz



Laundry
Jamie Whitlock



It was the smell of pancake mornings
that got me out of bed
when his fingers couldn't help but turn the dial.
(I know now he set the radio
Just outside my room intentionally.)

I remember how he turned the fire up
to accentuate the sizzle and pop of bacon
that led to my rise.
How he threw logs in the fire
being careful to bang the wood against the cast iron
walls of our furnace. Upon failing,
clanking and rustling with a metal
rod he found so necessary
Just on pancake mornings.

It must've been all he could take
to remain in the kitchen when he
heard the slow creak of my unfit, unfinished door.
The scraping of wood on wood.

He stood in silence, flipping, mixing,
Frying, seasoning browned potatoes.
He was smiling already, no doubt,
because I never caught it creeping to his lips.
Mornings when subtle laugh-lines
were fixated beneath dancing daddy eyes
he turned to face me
in his attempted nonchalant manner,
"You decided to get up?"

I never thought about it then.
A mysterious thing.
I never saw his smile come or go those mornings
but I think I saw it broaden when I replied,
"I smelled pancakes."

Houseguests
Knox McCoy

Chaos still sits at my table
Sipping cider with Desire.
But they make such good company
Chaos and Desire
As they attend to the fire
Adding logs upon logs
The fire burns brighter
Flames flying higher.
Desire whistles a sirenic hymn
And a grin visits each
I grow tired and long for sleep
But my subtle insinuations
Won't stop their song
I'd die before I ask them gone.

With a cabbage knife in my throat
Hands bound with apron strings
I exit through the servants' door,
No more facades
A solitary box, cold as a metal ladder in winter, accepts me.

Spiral Rail
David Albala



The silent salutation biddeth thee—"hither,"
Whispers softly a gentle chilling tale.
Mere silence creeps within thy mortal bone,
"Listen ever so intently and forget thou not
Two lessons thou acquireth; bare but one,
thou art mortal; mortal art thou, O raw soul."

Hither to thy salutation—gentle stirrings
a quiet caressful moment, awake O thou soul.
Forget not the enchanted tale and find life
a firm grasp of wisdom thou findeth within.
With affirmation to the wit and chilly tale
a silent breeze biddeth the mortal farewell.

Fret not, O mortal soul—for the day awaits--
tis whispers all around, "this too shall pass."
Yet a softer wind strikes thy fragile face
it welcomes thee into the new morning light.
Birds are singing and flowers adorn as gems,
gentle wind behind, for a moment—"farewell."

The Widow (for Cathy)

Farron Kilburn

Your scream cracked the window in the black limousine
when orchids hid their pertinent faces.
The wind did not react that day…
Did not whistle in threat or rustle new life.
No one spoke but the preacher in low, monotonous voice
It dropped down into the earth like the quiet countenance
you've held in your fragile grip for months now.

Through your heavy tinted glasses and front-row view
you could not see the azure sky.
My sideview logic reasoned "blue" meant
sad country singers drinking in dingy, dim-lit bars.
So when I saw your head nod, arms folded
in an infinity-shaped figure-eight I did not wince.
I held my stomach. I watched you walk.

We dared not speak, disrupt the fiery agents
mixing in your cloaked eyes. So our tears fell silent
like squeezing hopeful drops of rain as if lovely
day-lilies would spring from their fall just to cheer you—
to line your parting path. We defied the cloudless sky with our
salty rain. I thought this aroused a tight-lipped smile—
all we attempted to evoke in your lifeless shell.

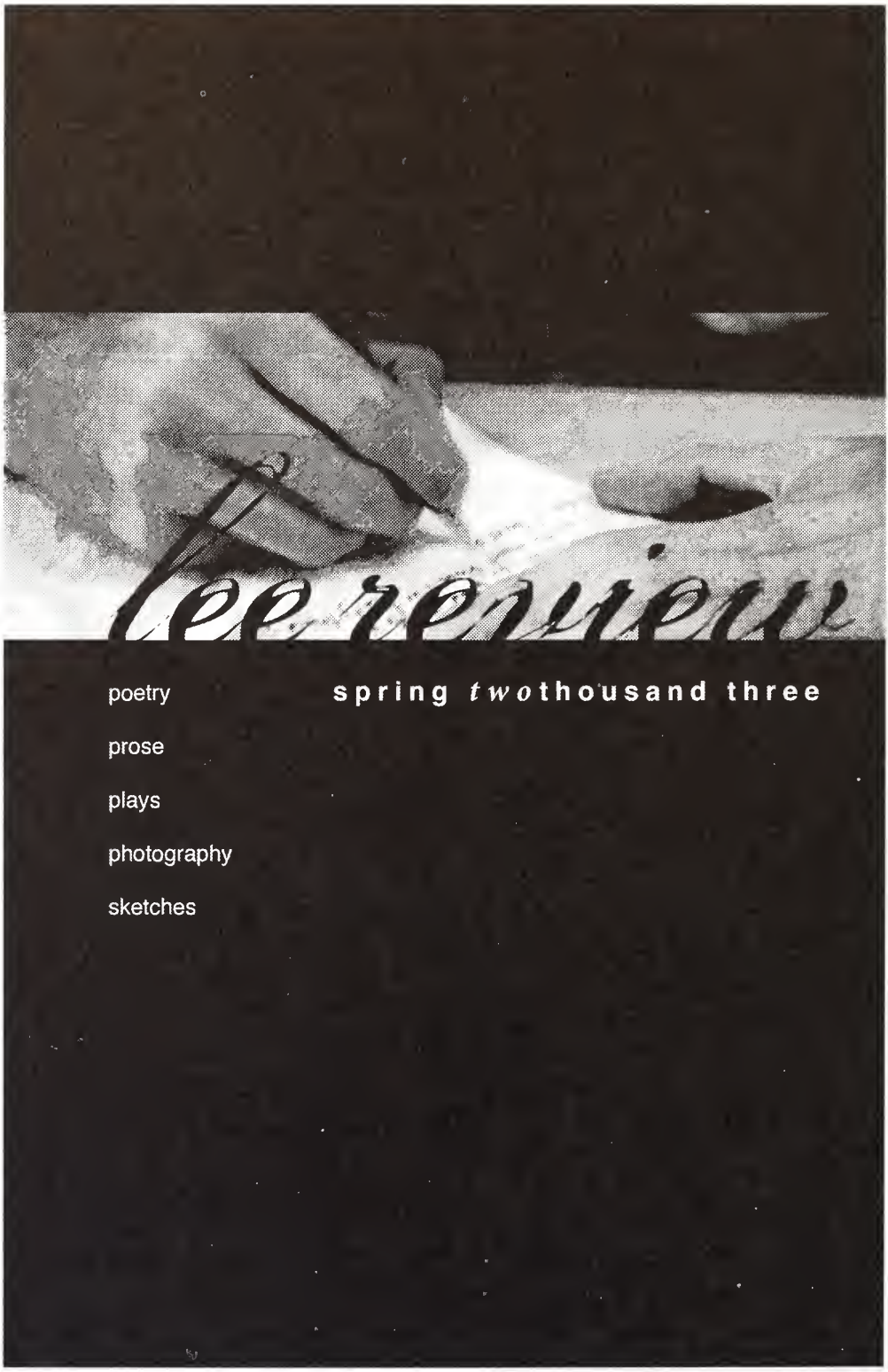
I could say we were cruel. Satisfied with this.
As faces gently smiled fading through the granite maze
I sat and crossed my legs to imitate your arms,
a small gesture I offered to you…
the permanence of the cold, thick ground;
the validity of the thick, endless sky.
You floated like a spirit or a nothing,
but I heard the click of the lock as the door clasped behind you.
Your first definitive moment in days.
I'm sure you removed your sunglasses

Because, in your pause, I worried,
questioned your existence,
like the click was a bullet lodged;
but then I heard you scream.

Please understand. It wasn't that I thought
myself worthy of him. I never did.
Never sinned to sacrilege. Rather, like
a Christmas card, sui Dickens, I, ragged
child with face pressed against the store's glass front
where painted horses prance in rings beneath
a lithographed tent on cotton snow,
and dolls' cherry cheeks gleam apple bright
as *their* muffed hands and ruffled chins stay snug
and warm...
while I, ankle-deep in snow trudged worldly—
cold, soiled, wan—
I, unholy and unclean...
I gaze myself entranced in tearless awe.
Never do I think to whisper even
"such heaven is meant for me."
So it was with him.
So it was with paradise.

In a way I think I was dreaming all the while,
or perhaps am always now.
Certain images recur, like a refrain,
a poet out of words, grasping at old conquests and heroes:
three fig trees, stark and naked in the dawn,
a cracked wineskin that pours for days,
two poles, clinging to each other
under the burden of redemption,
the stars, threatening to fall, trembling in a barren heaven.
I remember the time he came to the river,
stepping like a peasant with neither sword nor staff
followed by a few more haggard even than we—
their eyes staring out of sockets that had not yet heard of
resurrection.
His cousin stood waist-deep, shaking in the waters
which, to me, looked even then like a virgin,
dancing unreservedly between his thighs and breast,
depths of white and clear racing tumultuous,
misguided too well under the thick brown that pervaded
the beauty of those days.
They met, and for the first time I saw my master smile,
half his body engulfed beneath the almond liquid skin of water—
it was then that the sky cracked open,
only for a moment, and my visions began.
I cannot chase them, they do not scare at reason and sunlight:
a man before a crowd, a prophet silenced on a platter,
a dull king stupid irreligious who is unable to bear the sound of
screams,
three trees, nude in the darkness,
and the dawn dying in the center.

Cover Design
Daniel Ryan





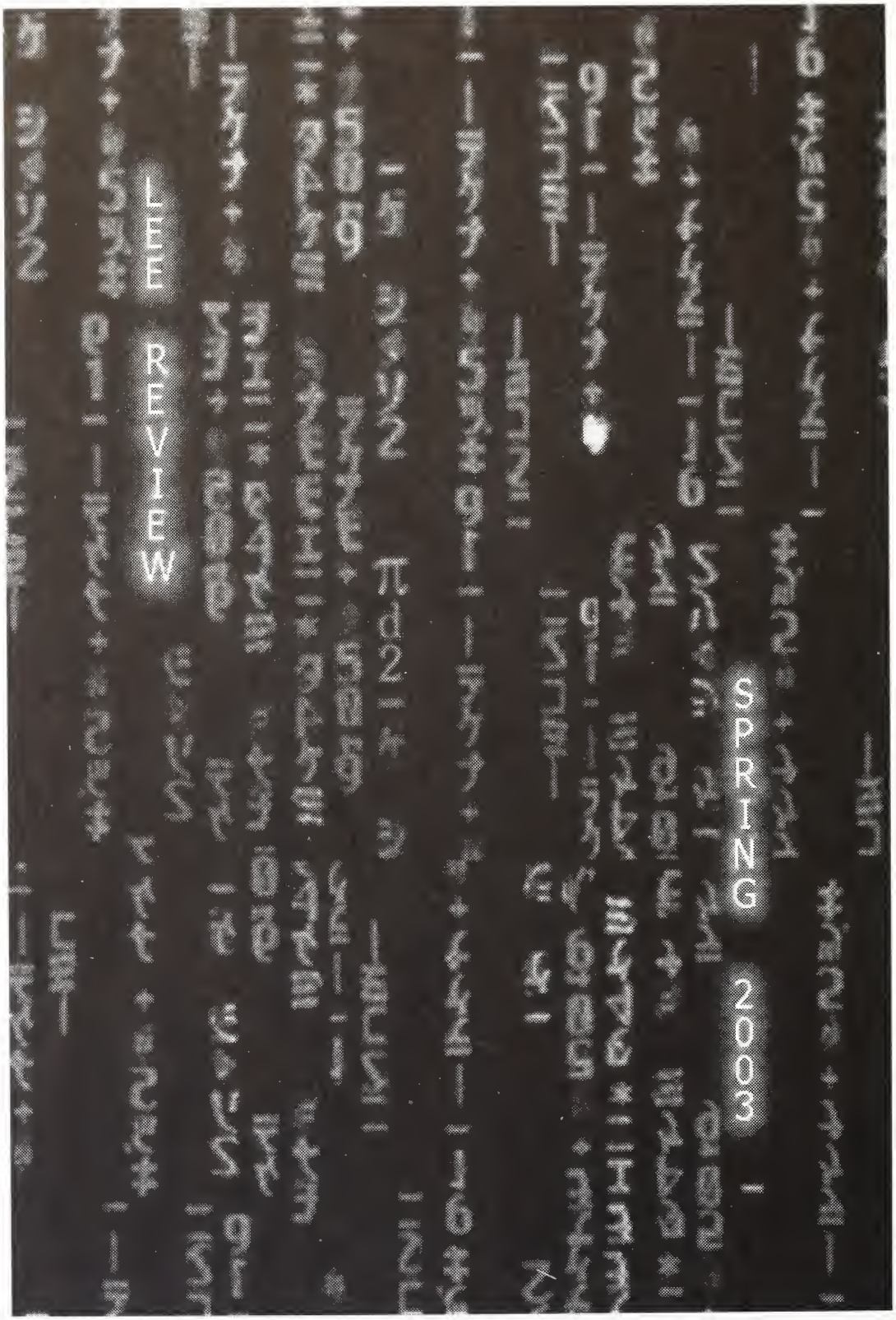
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